

Neoliberal and the Degradation of ISM



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Articles

Editorial Introduction

Capitalism in the Classroom: The Commodification of Education

Education policy and politics reflect, as so few other areas of social policy do, the role of the state not just in capitalist economic development but also in constructing a working class to fit the needs required for that development. Education, at least at the primary level, emerged as among the first public services concerned with human resource development. The industrialization and urbanization of 19th century capitalism required that its working class be numerate and literate. This link to capitalist relations of production and economic development was organic and necessary. Education not only provided workers with skills but socialized children into understanding their role as disciplined workers. And that link has been continuous. The confluence of post-war prosperity and the Cold War expanded the need for a still more broadly educated workforce capable of undertaking professional and quasi-professional work within the expanding private and public sector organizations, and to contribute to scientific research and development which was largely centred on military strategy.

Consequently, post-secondary education (PSE) underwent an unprecedented expansion and one largely funded by the state. At an ideological level, a new social contract emerged which wove liberal democratic citizenship, state-subsidized research and innovation, and increasing rates of productivity and capital accumulation into a virtuous cycle of mutual social, political and economic gains. Such was the Golden Age of capitalism! Today, into the fourth decade of neoliberalism, another new social contract is in the process of being written, and within this new regime of class relations, contemporary education policy and practice corresponds to and reproduces the new balance of class power expressed by this 'variety' of capitalism.

The contributions presented in this volume deal with a range of foci in education but all illustrate from their own perspective the "new brutalism" (Giroux) in education. All, to some degree, are concerned with the role of the state in neoliberalizing education. However, two (Cosar and Ergul; Bocking) are explicitly centred on the politics of public policy in enabling neoliberalization. Others are centred around the resistance, uneven though it is, of education workers and students to this process

(Potter; Nelson and Dobson; Hewitt-White; and Orlowski). Still others take a more labour process and ideational framing approach where the focus is on how professions are ideologically reconstructed (Macias) and how the critical centre-place of employability and entrepreneurship in post-secondary education have served to displace, if not destroy, the role of the university as a space for a broad range of perspectives, including critical ones, to incubate and engage with the larger society. Instead the only incubation is that of likely-to-fail business ventures. And entrepreneurship is an ideological carrier serving to prepare students for a life of precarity (Newstadt; Noonan and Coral; Mirrlees). And informing all of this is the corporate penetration and occupation of the university. The result is an astonishing tale of transformation, de-democratization and a narrowing of vision and therefore of purpose (Brownlee).

The issues and critiques raised here reflect and respond to the assault of fundamentalist neoliberals, who view education as a commodity to be bought and sold like any other, while the market is presumed to effectively (i.e. profitably) allocate scarce resources. Approaching some \$3 trillion in market opportunities, the education sector has come to be seen as a major source of untapped privatization. Indeed, along with health care, education is a significant dimension in the public services privatization and marketization 'gold rush' (Huws, 2008). As performance-based evaluations become more prevalent, testing and assessment niche markets are expected to continue growing.

A recent (and astonishing for its forthrightness) example of fundamentalist neoliberalism is found in the pages of *Rebuilding America's Middle Class: Prosperity Requires Capitalism in the Classroom*. This report from Southern Methodist University's School of Business, O'Neil Center for Global Markets and Freedom, reads as a revisionist history of US capitalism that trumpets the virtues of further marketizing education in all its forms. For instance, Dean of the School, Albert W. Niemi, contends "...only more competition will improve education," while Chairman of the O'Neil Center's Advisory Board Jerry Fulinwider, lamenting his distrust of big government, calls the "Wagner Act, a New Deal labor law...unfair, un-American." The target, in both respects, is the US's allegedly "centralized, bureaucratic public school system" and the unions "fighting to protect their own interests, not students' well-being."

Contending that US public schools have become a fiefdom for unionized workers and government waste, the author's of the report, W. Michael Cox and Richard Alm (2012, 11), argue: "The superiority of

the private sector over government arises from choice and competition... Government fails because it replaces choice and competition with the 'take it or leave it' diktat of politicians and bureaucrats. They decide what people ought to have – one size fits all. Government wallows in red tape, resists change and protects entrenched interests." Part populism and part right-wing propaganda, the report is soft on comparative data lacking both methodological rigour and theoretical clarity of comprehension. Rather, exaggerated rhetoric and repetitive ideological tropes dominate: "The impediment is a government-run school system resistant to innovation, indifferent to student needs and mired in mediocrity. We won't improve our school's until we get government out of the way." Bemoaning unions and their political meddling as obstacles, in a vain attempt at comparative analysis the authors then go on to make the case that the education sector should be run more like Apple as opposed to a fictitious government telecommunications company, or more like Federal Express as opposed to the United States Postal Service; both companies with well-documented exploitative labour practices, tax avoidance schemes and significant public subsidies which simultaneously go to fund their anti-corporate tax and social security fighting politicking.

Further, in a twist of methodological manipulation, Cox and Alm (2012, 10-13) aim to eliminate "demographic bias" by "adjusting each state's data to reflect the national mix of major ethnic groups in public schools: 59.2 percent whites, 24.6 percent Hispanics and 16.2 percent blacks." This seemingly benign method, while on the face of it incorporating ethno-racial oppressions, in fact does the opposite; it homogenizes state-level demographic differences in math, reading and science to demonstrate the apparent coincidence that students from predominantly white, higher-income earning states outperform their Hispanic and Black counterparts. Drawing on Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, the authors argue that public school systems should be run more like restaurants providing bare minimum standards. "Government penalizes individual success with higher taxes...failure often gets rewarded with a bigger subsidy" (ibid). They make a case for the total privatization of the educational sector, which includes vouchers, charter schools, tax deductions, credits, online learning and home schooling, without a mention of how such measures exacerbate ethno-racial and class-based oppressions or increase women's share of unpaid socially reproductive labour.

Their report reaches its culmination when Cox and Alm (2012, 16) claim:

“Students will be better serviced in private schools run like a business. There’s no reason to shy away from what this means: operating for profit, replacing principals with CEO’s, paying good teachers more, firing bad teachers, giving schools freedom to innovate in instruction methods and curriculum, letting new schools enter the market, allowing bad ones to fail, encouraging successful schools to takeover unsuccessful ones, getting rid of unions that protect bad teachers and stifle change.”

Without a glimmer of critical engagement, the authors assert that the market, god-like, simply knows best; but education policy should never be left to faith alone, especially in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Yet, in a recurring set of narratives, the O’Neil Centre is less concerned with improving education in the sense of enhanced democratic capacities, public engagement and social justice, but in a purely profit motivated sense. As one of the Centre’s keynote speakers held at a conference organized on “The Future of Economic Freedom” expressed: “Very curiously, despite the tremendous success of capitalism, it has what I call a very serious branding problem. Business isn’t seen as good. Instead business is mostly seen as selfish, greedy, exploitative, fundamentally unethical” (John Mackey in Cox and Alm, 2012, 21). Rather than continuing this promising line of inquiry, however, Mackey proposes “conscious capitalism” – a branding exercise to ideologically imbue notions of ‘responsible capitalism’ and counter criticisms of capitalist class power or deficiencies in policymaking outcomes.

In line with neoliberalism’s most vocal expositors seeking to transform the role of the state in the provision of social services, Veronique de Rugy argued: “I want government to compete with each other as ferociously as possible.” In an attempt to draw attention to the global benefits of neoliberal policies in raising living standards, Benjamin Powell, Director of the Free Market Institute at Texas Tech, added: “..outlawing sweatshops would just make workers in poor countries worse off. Sweatshop workers feel fortunate to have their jobs because garment factories offer better pay and working conditions than the most likely alternatives – subsistence farming, begging, scavenging and informal service sector jobs” (cited in Cox and Arm, 2012, 22). Other conference participants such as Distinguished Professor of Capitalism, Edward Lopez, and a host of others, went on to make similar arguments proclaiming the value of consolidating capitalism in the classroom. In an unrelated but growing choir, *The Economist* (2013) praised Small Heath Secondary

School in Birmingham, England, for their recent change to a business-friendly curriculum that welcomes “capitalists in the classroom.”

Unfortunately, many Canadian universities have been steadily emulating the US model of privatized post-secondary education.¹ The user-fee model, which assumes private, post-graduation returns by charging up-front fees borrowed against expected future earnings, as the articles in this volume argue, has shown itself to be a fundamentally flawed model that has reinforced ethno-racial, gender and class-based oppressions (Giroux, this volume; Ravitch, this volume). In Canada, this signifies a considerable movement away from a publicly funded post-secondary education system financed through a broad range of progressive taxes which, considered historically, have increased equality as measured by social mobility rates, enhanced working conditions, decreased student debt loads and provided a measure of insulation against corporate directed research and study (Brownlee, this volume).

In order to cope with chronic underfunding, many universities and colleges are turning to part-time instructors rather than full-time, tenured faculty, resulting in an increased rate of precarious employment as well as reduced student-professor face-time (Silver, this volume; McLaren, this volume; Harden, this volume). For neoliberal proponents “...knowledge [is viewed] as a commodity...and education as a path to income generation that must be privatized and made profitable in order for it to be maintained effectively.” (Caffentzis, 2005, 600). Increasingly, then, democratic control over resources, knowledge production and public space is monopolized by private interests with no other aim but to make a profit. Hence, many universities are streamlining their services and course offerings to those that address market considerations or are “business-related,” while those more critically inclined, and therefore less likely to buy into a purely market driven educational model are isolated or have their program spending reduced or axed all together. This includes smaller departments and/or programs such as women’s and cultural studies, history and philosophy, critical interdisciplinary centres, especially those focused on labour-capital relations and smaller specialized programs like political economy, social and political thought or, oddly enough, Canadian studies.

As a consequence, university investments in the arts, humanities and the social sciences pale in comparison with the physical sciences and explicitly entrepreneurial or business-related research. Rather, university administrators navigate the grant economy seeking to partner with

¹ Parts of this section are drawn extensively from Fanelli, 2013

private sector philanthropists, in the process endangering scholastic independence by catering to the needs of powerful sectoral interests. This necessarily “curtails the pedagogic processes that potentially generates a critical perspective against the [capitalist] system...” As Kumar (2010) continues: “Education is more than formal institutional structures and classroom transactions. It is an arena that reflects the agenda and need of the dominant class interests in a society. Therefore, to understand whatever happens in education it is important to understand the class politics, or labour-capital conflict, characterizing a society.” In this sense, the terrain of education and what is taught is at its core an ongoing field of class struggles across its diverse forms, including against racism, heteronormativity, gender-based discrimination and other intersecting axes of oppression. These issues, as much as concerns over universal accessibility, social justice, knowledge production and labour-capital-state conflicts in the PSE sector and beyond, are themselves deeply entrenched within capitalist power structures (James, this volume; Macias, this volume; Mirrless, this volume).

The province of Ontario, where we are located, is exemplary in this respect (Newstadt, this volume). Between 1988-9 and 2005-6 consecutive federal governments have reduced total transfer (both cash and tax points) payments for PSE by 40 percent (in 1998 dollars), while simultaneously pushing for enhanced partnerships with business counterparts in order to create new profit-making opportunities. This has resulted in the semi-privatization of Ontario’s PSE fees and thereby the creation of a quasi-market in the public sector (Fisher et al., 2006; Jones and Young, 2004). This is perhaps best reflected in the steadily advancing privatization of PSE in Ontario as there has been a proliferation of private career colleges opened since the 1990s as commercial enterprises. The number of these colleges rose from just over 200 in 1990 to over 450 by 2004 (Fisher et al., 2009; Levin, Kater, and Wagoner, 2006). In Ontario, between 1992-3 and 2004-5 provincial expenditures on PSE (in 2004 dollars) decreased by nearly 15 percent (Fisher et al. 2009, 553). Transfers to colleges and universities per full-time equivalent student enrollment over the same period decreased by nearly 32 percent (CAUT, 2006).

Thus in Ontario, user-fees and privatization measures are subtly being introduced under a policy framework of incrementalism, with recent reports proposing an expansion of for-profit PSE (Drummond Commission, 2012). In Ontario, spending as a share of university operating revenue between 1994 and 2004 decreased from 73 to 49 percent (Fisher et al. 2009, 554). While in 1990 tuition fees accounted for 20

percent of institutional operating budgets, today it's over 50 percent. As a consequence, between 1991 and 2008 average domestic tuition fees across Canada increased by 176 percent. It is useful to point out that approximately 40 percent of the Canadian population lives in Ontario and roughly 42 percent of Canadians choose Ontario as their destination for PSE (Jones and Young, 2004; Dylan, 2012). Thus what happens to PSE and labour disputes in Ontario may reveal broader trends Canada-wide (Hewitt-White, this volume; Nelson and Dobson, this volume).

Ontario occupies the unenviable distinction as the most expensive province in the country to complete an undergraduate degree. In 1990 the average cost of Canadian tuition was under \$1,500 but now stands at more than \$6,000 per year. This mirrors a similar process for graduate students who now have to pay the highest fees in the country at over \$9,000 per year.² The tuition fee freeze that students won between 2004 and 2006 was cancelled by the Liberal government and replaced with a new tuition framework. That framework, which ran from 2006 to 2012, allowed tuition fees for undergraduate students in their first year to increase up to 4.5 percent, while fee increases for the continuing years were limited to 4 percent. Fees in graduate and professional programs, however, could increase by up to 8 percent for students in their first year, and 4 percent for students in continuing years. Overall, tuition increases were limited to an annual average of 5 percent at each institution. This framework was succeeded by the current framework where the overall cap is 3 percent and that for graduate studies is a maximum 5 percent increase. The Ontario government has done away with specifying a separate undergraduate cap and leaves it to institutions to sort out the undergraduate increase within the overall limit of 3 percent based on their particular program mix (Artuso, 2013; Yan, 2013).

As a result, Ontario undergraduate students hold the largest debt at graduation averaging more than \$37,000 per student and increasing to over \$44,000 for PhD graduates. At \$9,718 average per-student funding, Ontario spends 20 percent less than the national average of \$12,500. This has led to larger class sizes and debt overhangs that have resulted in the number of summer days a student would have to work to make

² This pales in comparison with Quebec's average undergraduate cost of \$2,415, which were previously frozen for thirty-five years. It must be recalled that Quebec never passed the cost of federal funding cuts onto students, while college generally remains free for residents and scholarships are 'needs-based' in an effort to reduce socio-economic inequalities. Similarly, between 2002-04, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador reduced tuition fees by 25 percent and have since then been frozen, although recent austerity measures have begun to undermine the freeze and the Quebec differential.

enough money to pay tuition fees for one year rising from barely over six weeks in 1980 to fifteen weeks by 2010 (based on undergraduate fees averaging \$5,951, minimum wage and an 8-hour work day). As well, Ontario continues to provide zero funding transfers to universities for international students. This has not stopped many university administrations from seeing international (particularly graduate) students as a strong source of foreign capital since they pay upwards of three times what domestic students pay (see Ross, this volume).

All things considered, the trajectory of PSE in Ontario is one where higher education is envisaged as serving business-related vocational and technical labour market needs, sustaining competition and ensuring market-oriented research (Noonan and Coral, this volume).³ International trends suggest similar processes of neoliberalizing PSE (Bocking, this volume; Coşar and Ergül, this volume). Thus recent austerity measures must be considered in historical perspective as budget cuts and the pressures related to austerity are merely the latest in a sustained assault on public colleges and universities (Potter, this volume; Orłowski, this volume). This has been reflected in a de-democratization tendency or ‘disciplinary democracy’ in the PSE sector as across the public sector more generally that ever-more deploys authoritarian measures that marginalizes, and even criminalizes, dissent in defense of austerity and market freedoms (Albo and Fanelli, 2014).

The articles collected here challenge the unsubstantiated assertions of free market fundamentalists dogmatically insisting that education in all its forms requires capitalism in the classroom. This raises the question without providing any easy answers, of course, about under what conditions a social justice-centred approach to education that deepens and extends democratic capacities may flourish. *Alternate Routes* first explored these concerns in a series of panels organized at the conference *Capitalism in the Classroom: Neoliberalism, Education and Progressive Alternatives* held at Ryerson University on April 4, 2014. Like previous *Alternate Routes* conferences, video presentation can be found online at www.alternateroutes.ca.

All things considered, this volume builds on our previous conference, while continuing to grapple with subject matter challenging the neoliberal degradation of education. We would like to extend our gratitude to Ryerson University’s Faculty of Arts, Office of the Dean,

³ Some have argued that the University of Ontario Institute of Technology – the first new university in the province in forty years – is explicitly oriented to serving the automotive, technological and electrical power generation industries in Ontario (see Fisher et al., 2009).

Department of Politics and Public Administration, Department of Sociology, Centre for Labour Management Relations, and Toronto Centre for Social Justice for providing us with financial support in order to see both the conference and this issue through. Thanks are also due to the conference presenters and participants for their thoughtful contributions and engagement. With this volume, Bryan Evans joins our Editorial Advisory Board and John Shields as co-editor for our next issue. We look forward to continuing and extending *Alternate Routes'* commitment to critical social research.

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Articles

The Corporate Corruption of Academic Research

Jamie Brownlee¹

ABSTRACT: In Canada, and elsewhere, universities are becoming increasingly corporatized. This paper explores one aspect of the corporatization process: how university research has been transformed. I provide a detailed analysis of how corporate influence has corrupted academic research, from the selection of research topics, to research secrecy, through to how conflicts of interest and research bias influence the collection and release of information. As part of my analysis, I include an in-depth case study of biomedical research and academic medicine to show how the corporatization of higher education has led to systematic research bias and compromised the values that have historically defined scientific research. For universities and the medical profession, corporatization has produced a crisis of credibility in the published literature and tarnished the academy as a source of disinterested knowledge. For the public, the consequences run much deeper. I conclude by locating the corruption of academic research in the fundamental antagonism between corporate and academic institutions.

KEYWORDS: Corporatization, Conflicts of Interest, Research Bias, Biomedical Research, Academic Medicine

INTRODUCTION

Supporters of the corporatization of higher education present the benefits of university-industry research ties in clear, decisive terms. These purported benefits include financial support for universities, commercially valuable product development, faculty access to research and development opportunities, enhanced technological innovation and scientific progress. Some even claim that industry funding and public-private partnerships enhance customary measures

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of academic quality, such as publication productivity (Crespo and Dridi, 2007). In contrast, I argue that the corporatization of academic research has not been beneficial for universities or for society. On the contrary, it has reduced researchers' ability to pursue independent lines of scholarship, compromised the values and practices that have historically defined scientific and other academic research, and tarnished the university as a site of unbiased inquiry. Using this position as a starting point, this paper explores how university research has been transformed – and the public interest threatened – by the corporatization process. I provide a detailed analysis, including an in-depth case study of academic medicine, of how corporate influence has, in effect, corrupted academic research, from the selection of research topics, to research secrecy, through to how conflicts of interest and research bias influence the collection and release of information. I conclude by locating the corruption of academic research in the fundamental antagonism between corporate and academic institutions, while advancing the need for radical changes to the corporate-academic research interface.

SELECTION OF RESEARCH TOPICS

Corporate influence crosses all aspects of the academic research process, including at the outset with the selection of research topics and projects. Rather than setting their own research agendas in response to social needs, academics are increasingly joining with partners from the private sector to define their research priorities. As a result, the basis for deciding what knowledge is worth pursuing is defined more and more by the criteria of corporate demand. Many areas of university research have been affected by this shift. In agricultural research, for example, the influence of agrochemical companies has moved research agendas in the direction of resource intensive production technologies, genetic engineering and chemical-based pest and weed control. In the latter case, hundreds of millions of dollars are being allocated to the development of new toxic pesticides in university labs, while the study of biological control – the discipline of controlling agriculture pests through means other than pesticides – has all but disappeared. Likewise, because of their dependence on industry funding, the research of most weed scientists centres on chemical herbicides rather than alternative forms of management like biological

control and crop rotation strategies.² According to John McMurtry (2009, 17), independent agricultural research in areas such as “integrated pest management, organic farming for productive efficiency, management-intensive grazing, small-scale producer cooperatives, alternatives to factory-processed livestock and avoidance of ecological contamination by genetically-engineered commodities” have been “silently selected out” of universities because corporations are not interested in funding them.

The same is true in many areas of health research. In recent years, far more resources have been put into investigating the cellular/genetic basis for cancer than into environmental factors, which are now widely recognized to be key determining factors. Not only are corporations unwilling to fund research into the linkages between cancers and industrial toxins, they have also made a concerted effort to suppress academic research that demonstrates any kind of causal relationship. In the same way, corporate and government funding programs have worked to redirect cancer research from causes to cures (Thompson, 2008). It is often claimed that without the money and support of large corporations, universities would lack the capacity (and the incentive) to produce new life-saving drugs, medicines and therapies. The reality, however, is quite different. Corporate influence has diverted academic attention away from vaccine research and diseases that affect the world’s poor (e.g., malaria, schistosomiasis, tuberculosis and dengue fever). In fact, a recent study of the top 54 Canadian and US research universities found that less than 3 percent of research funding is devoted to diseases that affect the world’s poorest people. The report also notes that more than a billion people currently suffer from “neglected diseases,” or diseases that are “rarely researched by the private sector because most of those affected are too poor to provide a market for new drugs” (Universities Allied for Essential Medicines, 2013, para. 8). For commercial reasons, the vast majority of research investments by the pharmaceutical industry (and increasingly universities) focus on what are called “lifestyle drugs” – high-profit treatments for obesity, baldness, wrinkles and sexual dysfunction. Of course, the impact of corporatization on academic research agendas is not limited to the sciences. In her work, Lauren Snider (2000; 2003) has documented a precipitous decline in social science research on corporate crime in Canada and elsewhere. She attributes this decline

² Nearly two decades ago in *Toxic Deception*, Dan Fagin and Marianne Lavell (1996, 52) quoted the former president of the Weed Science Society of American as stating: “If you don’t have any research [funding] other than what’s coming from the ag[ro] companies, you’re going to be doing research on agricultural chemicals. That’s the hard, cold, fact.”

to the unwillingness of private sponsors and governments to fund this type of research, and to political pressures both inside and outside of the academy.

In some ways, academics may be viewed as victims in this process. University researchers are under intense pressure to secure outside funding and many would be unable to continue their research programs without such support. A recent survey by researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, for example, found that three quarters of Canadian academics said that pressures to raise external funds had increased since their first appointment (Tamburri, 2012). Furthermore, the distinction between research choices made out of scholarly interest and those made because of funding availability is not an easy one to draw. Many academics believe they are engaging with particular topics out of their own free choice when in reality they are often “adjusting their curiosities” to match the interests of available sponsors. According to Jeff Schmidt (2000), many funders are aware that they can arouse the necessary interest in academic circles without formally dictating research priorities. On the other hand, academics are also active participants in the selection of their areas of research. The fact that so many of them acquiesce to (or embrace) corporate lines of research suggests a high level of conscious complicity. As Claire Polster (2000, 30) explains, many Canadian scholars freely admit to doing “whatever it takes” to strengthen their granting performance, including “switching their research topics to well-funded areas in which they often have lesser expertise.” In sum, although corporate-university ties may reduce the ability of some academics to engage in alternative or critical research agendas, the selection of research topics are moral and political *choices* that cannot simply be blamed on financial necessity or the demands of funders.

RESEARCH SECRECY

Universities have traditionally been an important source of the knowledge commons, which Jennifer Sumner (2008, 193) defines as “cooperative human constructions that protect and/or enable universal access to the life good of knowledge ... This knowledge is shared, not privatized, packaged, priced, and profited from.” Similarly, David Bollier (2002) describes the academy as a “gift economy.” The gift economy of academia presumes that research and scholarly resources are produced in accordance with publicly articulated purposes, and supported by the free production and circulation of

knowledge, both within and outside of the university. For Bollier, gift economies are “potent systems for eliciting and developing behaviors that the market cannot,” such as honesty, information sharing and mutual collaboration (30). In their seminal work on the scientific enterprise, Robert Merton (1973) and Michael Polanyi (1969) reached similar conclusions about the nature of academic research. Both argued that the products of research should be open and shared and that researchers should be primarily disinterested or motivated by a commitment to advance knowledge rather than personal or financial gain. These are not simply proscriptions for the way academics ought to behave; rather, the open and disinterested nature of academic inquiry is precisely what makes it so innovative. As Jennifer Washburn (2005, 195) explains, the system “does a remarkably good job of speeding the creation of new discoveries, hastening public disclosure, and enabling peers to evaluate and replicate new research findings to ensure their accuracy – all of which helps to broaden the stock of reliable public knowledge that is available for future research and innovation.” These concepts – of knowledge commons and gift economies – are idealized terms. Research secrecy has always had a place in academia, as some professors have always been reluctant to share ideas out of fear that they will be appropriated by others. Nonetheless this practice runs counter to academic ideals and has increased under corporatization.³

One of the ways that corporatization has fostered academic secrecy is through the creation of a more competitive, utilitarian and performance-based research culture. For example, as publication productivity becomes more important for academic appointment and promotion there are fewer incentives for collaboration and knowledge sharing among researchers. The same is true for graduate students, whose PhD experiences increasingly resemble competitive self-marketing marathons. And, as noted above, greater pressures has been placed on faculty to obtain external grants, which has helped to transform the university from a knowledge sharing institution to a site of competitive fundraisers. As Polster (2007, 610) discovered in her research, the importance placed on grant acquisition “is reducing some colleagues’ willingness to support one another in a variety of ways, such as reading or discussing research

³ Some have been particularly critical of academics who keep research findings secret. “Like a lie,” writes Robert Wolff (1969, 129), “the commitment to secrecy sunders the moral bond between the members of the university.” A person who keeps their research secret “is no more capable of entering genuinely into the public discourse of the university than is an FBI agent posing as a student radical.”

proposals and papers. It is also taking a toll on academic collegialism and morale.”⁴ Polster also found that there is a growing tendency for Canadian academics to avoid scientific conferences for fear of disclosing valuable information and, when they do attend, these “private academics” often refuse to provide details of their research or engage in discussions that might compromise funding or commercial interests (Polster, 2000).

In addition to these pressures, corporate funding and public-private partnerships contribute to research secrecy more directly, including through non-disclosure and intellectual property (IP) agreements. Whereas academic secrecy is often a short-term expedient to ensure publication, commercial secrecy via IP arrangements can be a lengthy process that remains in place for as long as proprietors deem it to be in their interest. In some cases, contractual arrangements can force academics to transfer the results of their research to the firms who paid for it. In others, the publication of findings may be delayed until a corporate sponsor obtains a patent on its IP. Selective disclosure and withholding of data may also occur if the research results are potentially damaging to the corporate bottom line. Efforts to maintain research secrecy by certain industries, such as the pharmaceutical industry, are especially harmful, with some companies using “gag orders, appealing to trade secrets, concealing [drug risks] behind a veil of attorney-client privilege, settling legal actions out of court to hide data and documents, [and] stalking and harassing academic critics” (Healy, 2012, 119). A recent example of how corporate influence leads to research secrecy involved the oil giant British Petroleum (BP). In the first few months after the Gulf oil disaster in 2010, BP enlisted academic scientists into exclusive research and consulting contracts that were replete with secrecy clauses and barred them from making their findings public (Lea, 2010). Not only was BP attempting to subvert the scientific process, but it was putting measures in place to ensure it would control academic data and evidence about the disaster. This example, and others like it, demonstrates how corporate-university alliances have the potential to stifle research in the public interest.

Of course, it is not just the proprietary control of capital that is responsible for IP-related secrecy in higher education. It has also resulted from the autonomous initiatives and commitments of academic actors. For much of the twentieth century, academics (and universities) did not consider research-related IP as an opportunity for economic enrichment.

⁴ This increased emphasis on “performance” and competition in university research has been well documented at some institutions, such as the University of Ottawa, where reduced collegiality was identified as one of the most noticeable consequences (Chan and Fisher, 2008).

In fact, limiting scholarly or public access by commercializing research results was regarded as a suspect practice, or worse.⁵ However, these ideas about the role of IP in higher education have since largely been abandoned. Under corporatization, “academic capitalists” within the university have become far more aggressive about pursuing the material benefits of knowledge production, including by embracing IP agreements (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). This trend highlights the active, sometimes leading, role that professors and administrators can play in corporatizing university research.

Although the extent of research secrecy in Canada is not well documented, this topic has been explored extensively in the US. To summarize the literature, US research suggests that researchers with industry support are more likely to (i) report that “trade secrets” resulted from their research (information kept secret to protect its proprietary value); (ii) be denied the information/data necessary to publish their results; (iii) delay publication of their research; and (iv) deny other academics access to their data and research findings (Krimsky, 2003; Washburn, 2005). Research also suggests that graduate students may be especially vulnerable to secrecy agreements because they rely on the prompt publication of their findings in order to secure funding or employment, yet they are often prevented from publishing in a timely fashion or even from completing their projects. In one Harvard study, researchers found that 88 percent of life sciences companies reported that their university contracts required graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to keep information confidential (Blumenthal, Causino, Campbell, and Louis, 1996). A more recent investigation of graduate students and postdoctoral holders in computer science, chemical engineering and the life sciences found that one in four had been denied information relevant to their research, and this was especially prevalent in research groups with links to industry (Holden, 2006).

To summarize, research secrecy is incompatible with academic values and has negative implications for researchers, universities and the

⁵ Many renowned university inventors who were formally entitled to patent royalties, for example, did their best to avoid personal remuneration, preferring to channel the obligatory profits back into their laboratories. Others resisted patenting altogether. For instance, when Jonas Salk discovered the polio vaccine in 1954 (an invention clearly worth millions), he did not patent the vaccine because he believed that no individual should own or profit from discoveries made about the natural world. Similarly, Stanley Cohen and Herbert Boyer, who discovered the gene-splicing technique in 1973, resisted patenting because they recognized that their discovery depended upon the freely available work of other scientists. In short, the prevailing academic view was that knowledge should be placed in the public domain without proprietary restrictions.

public at large. Within the academy, secrecy disrupts collegial relationships, reduces knowledge sharing and promotes waste as researchers needlessly duplicate work that was not made freely available. Secrecy also restricts the course of knowledge production because scientific progress depends on researchers building on the findings of others. IP protections such as patents, for example, are highly protectionist and tend to stifle innovation by restricting the diffusion of knowledge both to and from universities (Murray and Stern, 2007; Rosell and Agrawal, 2009). According to Mike Lazaridis (2004, 2), former President and Co-CEO of Research in Motion, “patenting is an inherently secretive process requiring its proponents to withdraw from the very processes that expand and transfer knowledge in a research university – open disclosure, peer review, and publication in scientific journals.” Most importantly, research secrecy inhibits the amount of knowledge that is available in the public domain, including in areas such as food production and medicine. Jennifer Washburn (2005) has reported that roughly one quarter of patented inventions in agricultural biotechnology – which have been tied up under restrictive commercial agreements – originated in public institutions at public expense. The same is true of many medicines (e.g., AIDS drugs) and even human genes, which have been patented and exclusively licensed to biopharmaceutical companies (e.g., the gene responsible for hereditary breast cancer). As universities and academics are increasingly guided by market logic, research secrecy will continue to present a serious threat to the public interest.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND RESEARCH BIAS

The corporatization of the academy has brought about other changes in the university research process, including conflicts of interest and research bias. In general, a conflict of interest occurs when a person is inclined or obliged to pursue interests that compete with one another in a fundamental way. More specifically for the purposes here, conflict of interest situations are those in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise a researcher’s professional judgement in considering or reporting research results. An obvious group who are affected by conflicts of interest are senior academic economists in the US (and elsewhere) who occupy lucrative and high ranking positions in governments and/or major financial institutions. As Charles Ferguson (2010) observes, “the economics profession – in economics departments, and in business, public policy, and law schools – has become so compromised by conflicts of interest that it now functions almost as a support

group for financial services and other industries whose profits depend heavily on government policy.” Ferguson adds that the build-up to the 2008 financial crisis “runs straight through the economics discipline” (para. 12). What is particularly noteworthy about academic conflicts of interests is that they are rarely disclosed. For example, one study examining 62,000 articles in 210 scientific journals found that only one half of one percent included relevant information about authors’ research-related financial ties, even though all of the journals formally required such disclosure (King, 1999). Conflicts of interest may be especially damaging for universities; short of outright fraud, nothing is as threatening to the integrity of the university than the perception that it has been bought off.

There is no shortage of scholars who, by virtue of their corporate and other connections, are affected by conflicts of interests. One of the main consequences of this conflict is the resulting research bias. In some cases, research bias results from direct corporate censorship or academic corruption. For example, one study of university-industry engineering research centres in the US found that 35 percent allowed corporations to delete information from papers prior to publication (Washburn, 2005). Likewise, a small minority of academics have deliberately falsified results to produce findings that accord with their interests or those of their sponsor. However, a much more prescient cause of research bias is the *unconscious* effect of financial benefit or career advancement. The logic is simple: researchers with a vested interest in reaching a particular conclusion will tend to weigh arguments and evidence in a biased fashion. The mechanisms though which this occurs are varied and subtle, including how questions are framed, how studies are designed, how contrary interpretations are emphasized and how conclusions are worded. Complicating matters is that the vast majority of academics perceive themselves to be objective and impartial, and corporate sponsors often recognize the importance of encouraging researchers to “feel” impartial (Freudenburg, 2005). In any event, a substantial body of empirical evidence indicates that even if corporate sponsors allow researchers free reign over the research process – which they often do not – projects financed by big business are far more likely to reach conclusions that support the interests of their sponsor.

Many areas of academic research have been affected by research bias. One of the most obvious examples is food and nutrition. Researcher Marion Nestle (2007) has documented the extensive network through

which food companies sponsor nutrition research, nutrition conferences, food and nutrition journals and the activities of professional societies. As a result, research findings in this area often favour the interests of their sponsors. In fact, Nestle argues that sponsorship almost invariably predicts the results of research into specific foods or nutrients. Similarly, Lesser, Ebbeling, Goozner, Wypij, and Ludwig (2007) looked at studies on the relationship between soft drinks and childhood obesity. They found that while independent studies almost always find an association between habitual consumption of soft drinks and obesity, industry-sponsored studies rarely do.

Tobacco research offers another example of how industry funding distorts the research process. One study found that 94 percent of articles that had authors who were affiliated with the tobacco industry concluded that second hand smoke was not harmful. In contrast, only 13 percent of articles where the authors had no tobacco ties reached the same conclusion (Barnes and Bero, 1998). When the researchers ran a multivariate regression controlling for other variables (article quality, peer review status, article topic and year of publication), having an author with a tobacco-company affiliation was the *only* variable associated with the conclusion that second-hand smoke is not harmful. The basic strategy of the tobacco industry has been to use university scientists to make the dangers of cigarettes appear controversial. These companies depend on the fact that observers tend to associate academic research with independence and impartiality. Of course, this is not only true of tobacco companies; “decency by association” is one of the reasons why most corporations that produce harmful products or engage in destructive practices actively seek academic partnerships. In the area of climate science, for instance, this is precisely why “academics”, and not the president of Imperial Oil, are chosen to deliver the message that global warming is not occurring” (Gutstein, 2009, 305). The ability of the tobacco industry to downplay the risks of tobacco consumption partly resided in the extensive network of ties it had created with medical researchers (Cohen, 2008; Kaufman et al., 2004). Although these relationships have dissipated in recent years, the same cannot be said about the relationship between academic medicine and the pharmaceutical industry. More than any other area of academic research, conflicts of interest in biomedicine are threatening the health and well-being of people around the world.

BIG PHARMA, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND THE PERVERSION OF ACADEMIC MEDICINE

Historically, medical schools and researchers advanced medical science (and built their reputations) by maintaining clear boundaries between the academy and industry. In the area of pharmaceuticals, academic distrust of business ran especially high (Atkinson-Grosjean and Fairly, 2009). In Canada, this changed in the late 1980s when government support for medical research declined and medical schools embraced the pharmaceutical industry as a way to maintain a stable influx of new funds. These efforts were facilitated in 1992 by the creation of the Council for Biomedical and Health Research, which brought together the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges (representing 16 university faculties of medicine), the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies and the Health Research Foundation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association to generate public support for drug-related research. At the same time, the field of biotechnology expanded in Canadian universities and set the stage for widespread commercial involvement in biomedicine. Over the past few decades, the life sciences – mostly represented by biotechnology – has accounted for a disproportionate share of Canadian universities' commercial output (Niosi, 2006).

Today, the association between Big Pharma, medical science and university facilities and researchers is well established. Drug companies spend billions each year wooing physicians (more than they spend on consumer advertising or research) in order to generate support for their products, align medical research with corporate interests, and amass a network of well-respected consultants and lobbyists. According to one estimate, 94 percent of psychiatrists-in-training have accepted gifts from pharmaceutical firms by their third year (Ferrie, 2013). Further, Canadian medical researcher Joel Lexchin (2010) notes that drug companies in Canada spend between \$2.4 and \$4.8 billion annually pushing their drugs to doctors. These figures are not surprising, considering that doctors have sole prescription power over some 20,000 pharmaceutical drugs that generate hundreds of millions of prescriptions every year. According to psychiatrist David Healy (2012, 8-9), the industry monitors the prescribing habits of doctors in the Western world, and data on who prescribes what is used by corporations to shape their marketing strategies. The fact that drugs are made available on a prescription-only basis has put a "relatively small group of people with no training in or awareness of marketing techniques – doctors – in the gun sights

of the most sophisticated marketing machinery on the planet.”⁶ The pharmaceutical industry also provides hundreds of millions of dollars in financial subsidies to medical journals via the purchase of advertisements, special supplements and reprints, and it spends billions more on continuing medical education (CME) programs. The proportion of CME programs that are funded by industry has climbed steadily in recent years (Elliot, 2010). Sales and marketing divisions dominate corporate decision-making around the distribution of CME money because the primary goal of these “public service” programs is to push new drugs (Ridgeway, 2010).

Through these marketing and outreach efforts, corporations have infiltrated medical schools. In the US, for example, one survey found that nearly two thirds of department heads at medical schools and teaching hospitals had financial or other ties to industry (Mangan, 2007). According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, a national sample of over 3,100 US physicians revealed that 94 percent were involved with drug companies and 28 percent were paid consultants for the industry (Campbell et al., 2007). A further set of connections involves the millions of clinical trials for drugs and other medical treatments that are conducted in academic medical centres around the world. Industry funds approximately 70 percent of all clinical trials and 70 percent of these are run by contract research organizations that produce data that is wholly owned by their sponsors (Sismondo, 2009a). Although clinical trials are ostensibly “research” activities, a large proportion amount to marketing exercises and commercial product testing. Remarkably, even members of institutional review boards and committees, whose job it is to “police the researchers” and protect human participants in medical trials, have extensive conflicts of interest because of their relationships with the drug industry (Brainard, 2006; Campbell et al., 2003). A recent study of 288 panel members responsible for clinical practice guidelines in Canada and the US found that over half of these individuals had financial conflicts of interest (Neuman, Korenstein, Ross and Keyhani, 2011).

As this cursory review makes clear, a myriad of potential conflicts and inherent tensions are involved in the relationship between corporations, the medical profession and biomedical researchers. In fact, medical journal editors now frequently complain that they can no

⁶ For example, Healy notes that marketers have learned to distinguish between “high-flyers,” “sceptical experimenters,” “rule-bound” and “silent majority” doctors (55). Each of these groups is targeted differently by marketers in an effort to direct the prescribing habits of physicians.

longer find academic experts without conflicts of interest.⁷ The most common conflicts are financial in nature; these range from the provision of “hands-off” corporate sponsorships to situations where researchers hold a personal financial stake in their research outcomes. The latter case is especially troublesome, yet surprisingly common. In his seminal study, Sheldon Krimsky and his colleagues (1996) looked at the industry connections of the authors of 789 scientific papers published by 1,105 researchers in 14 major life science and biomedical journals. The study found that 34 percent of the articles (267) had at least one lead author with a financial interest in the outcome of the research (not one article disclosed this interest).⁸ Moreover, the 34 percent figure likely under-represented the actual level of conflict of interest because the researchers were unable to account for certain variables, such as authors who received consulting fees from companies involved in commercial applications of their work. Shortly after the release of Krimsky’s findings, the leading life sciences journal *Nature* published a statement in which it acknowledged that financial conflicts of interests were common in biomedical research, but asserted that this was of little consequence. According to the journal, Krimsky’s study provided no evidence that the “undeclared interests led to any fraud, deception or bias in presentation, and until there is evidence that there are serious risks of such malpractice, this journal will persist in its stubborn belief that research as we publish it is indeed research, not business” (Avoid Financial ‘Correctness,’ p. 469).

Since *Nature’s* aggressive rejoinder, an abundance of evidence has been accumulated supporting the hypothesis that corporate funding and conflicts of interest are associated with research bias in the medical field. This pattern holds not only for research where investigators have a personal stake in the outcome, but for industry-sponsored studies more broadly. For example, Mildred Cho and Lisa Bero (1996) found that 98 percent of drug studies funded by pharmaceutical companies reached

⁷ Ellen Schrecker (2010) recounts an incident where the *New England Journal of Medicine* decided to ban authors with a financial interest in any company (or its competitor) that made a product discussed in the author’s work. It eventually had to add the word “significant” because the editors could find only one submission over the previous two years that complied with the requirement. Likewise, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* attempted to implement a similar conflict of interest policy but the editors could not find enough qualified researchers that did not have ties to drug companies. For additional examples, see Washburn (2005: Chapter 5, note 9).

⁸ “Financial interest” in this study included (i) serving on a scientific advisory board of a biotechnology company that develops products in the area related to the scientist’s research; (ii) holding a position as an officer, director or major shareholder in a company whose products are related to the scientist’s research; and/or (iii) possessing a patent or a patent application closely related to the scientist’s work.

favourable conclusions about drug safety and efficacy, compared with 79 percent of studies not funded by industry. Another investigation found that studies of cancer drugs funded by drug companies were nearly eight times less likely to reach unfavourable conclusions compared with similar studies funded by non-profit organizations (Friedberg, Saffran, Stinson, Nelson and Bennett, 1999). Similarly, medical researchers in Toronto reported a strong association between purported drug safety and financial conflicts of interest (Stelfox, Chua, O'Rourke and Detsky, 1998). More specifically, they found that 96 percent of authors whose findings supported the safety of a particular class of drugs had a financial relationship with the drug manufacturers, compared with 60 percent of "neutral" authors and 37 percent of authors who were critical of the drugs' safety.

More recently, several meta-analyses of the biomedical literature have provided compelling evidence about the linkages between industry funding and research bias. The first by Justin Bekelman, Yan Li and Cary Gross (2003), looked at research published over a twenty-three year period on the extent, impact and management of conflicts of interest in biomedical research. They found a strong and consistent correlation between industry sponsorship (mainly, but not all pharmaceutical) and pro-industry conclusions. In a similar review, Lexchin, Bero, Djulbegovic and Clark (2003) found that studies funded by pharmaceutical companies were far more likely to have outcomes favouring their sponsors than studies sponsored by other organizations, and that "systematic bias" favours products that are made by companies funding university research. Some years later, Sergio Sismondo (2008) found that 17 out of 19 studies investigating the effects of drug company sponsorships showed an association (usually a strong association) between industry sponsorship and pro-industry conclusions.⁹ Taken together, these studies illustrate the impact of corporate power in academic medicine and the important differences between publicly funded versus privately funded research.

It should be noted that in addition to research bias, outright research fraud is also on the rise. One recent review of survey research on scientific misconduct found that falsifying data is far more common than

⁹ Within this larger review, Sismondo (2008) reports that of 100 articles published in the pulmonary/allergy literature, 98 percent of articles sponsored by drug companies reported findings that were favourable to the drug being studied (compared with 32 percent of other articles). Moreover, in a sample of 542 articles on clinical trials in psychiatry, 78 percent of sponsored studies favoured the sponsor's drug versus only 48 percent of those without industry sponsorship.

previously estimated, and that this form of misconduct is reported most frequently in the case of medical and pharmacological research (Fanelli, 2009). Approximately one third of respondents in the study admitted to some form of questionable research practice, such as altering the research design, methodology or results in response to pressures from funders. More evidence of biomedical fraud came to light in 2012, when a team of 100 scientists tried to replicate the results of 53 of the most widely cited cancer research papers. This effort resulted in only six research studies being validated, while the rest could not be replicated. Many of the studies were apparently bogus (Sharav, 2014). “Shockingly,” writes medical journalist Helke Ferrie (2013, 284), “this was not Pharma-generated junk science, but came from university researchers who misled companies wanting to use their research for new cancer drugs. Indeed, there is no honour among thieves.” These studies of research fraud support the growing consensus that Big Pharma funding and partnerships in academic medicine is distorting scientific evidence to promote commercial interests.

Corporate funding and conflicts of interest help to explain the preponderance of research bias in academic medicine, but it is not the whole story. Under corporatization, academics are increasingly ceding control over every stage of the clinical research process.

GHOST-WRITING AND GHOST-MANAGEMENT

Within the biomedical literature, corporate employees routinely write “academic” papers that emerge from corporate-sponsored research. This practice – often referred to as “ghost-writing” – generally works as follows: when research results are ready to be written up, a corporation’s marketing department will contract with medical writers from a public relations or “medical communications” firm to produce a manuscript. After several drafts have been completed, the manuscript is then inspected by the company’s marketing and legal departments for approval. It is usually around this time that an academic “author” will inspect and sign off on the article. When the article subsequently appears in a pre-selected journal, the ghost-writer(s) either disappears or is subtly acknowledged as providing some form of editorial assistance. Frequently, the academic who assumes authorship will not have had access to the data on which the study is based and, in some cases, is simply paid to have his or her name appear on the publication. The compensation rates for professors who participate in ghost-writing generally range from \$1,000 to \$2,500 per article; however, payments

can be as high as \$10,000, especially if the writer presents the findings at conferences or in medical education lectures (Elliot, 2010; Krinsky, 2003). Meanwhile, professional ghost-writers are often paid between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per article and have annual salaries that can exceed \$100,000 (Mirowski and Van Horn, 2005; Schafer, 2004).

How prevalent is ghost-writing in the medical literature? Given the inherent secrecy of the process, firm data are not available. Evidence suggests, however, that the practice is commonplace, and even extends to medical textbook publishing (e.g., Basken, 2009; Lacasse and Leo, 2010; Wilson, 2010). In fact, according to one study, the *majority* of articles on lucrative pharmaceutical drugs in leading medical journals are likely to be wholly or partially ghostwritten (Healy and Cattell, 2003). It is important to note that many ghost-writing campaigns are launched (or continue) after evidence of dangerous or deadly drug side effects are produced. Examples include Wyeth (now part of Pfizer) and the hormone replacement drugs Prempro and Premarin (breast cancer, heart disease, stroke); Eli Lilly and the antipsychotic drug Zyprexa (obesity and diabetes); and GlaxoSmithKlein and the antidepressant Paxil (suicidal ideation in children) (Elliot, 2010). Healy has even suggested that in some areas – such as on-patent drugs and the safety/effectiveness of antidepressants for children – virtually all of the published literature includes material that is authored by medical writers or pharmaceutical company personnel (Fine, 2009; Healy, 2008; 2012). It follows that studies of antidepressants in children “offer the greatest known divide in medicine between what published reports in the scientific literature say on the one side and what the raw data in fact show” (Healy, 2012, 149). As Healy documents, what the studies say is that these drugs are remarkably safe and effective. In contrast, the data show that children are killing themselves at a much higher rate while they are on some of these drugs. For years, psychiatric drugs prescribed to children and adolescents have been associated with a long and adverse list of physical and emotional effects (Whitaker, 2010). If medications that carry a high risk of disability and death in children are considered fair game for this kind of corporate-academic fakery, it would appear that there are few, if any, limits.

As disturbing as these practices are, ghost-writing is only one part of an increasingly sophisticated system of “ghost-management” in medical research (Sismondo, 2007; 2009b). Ghost-management refers to the broader phenomenon whereby drug companies and their agents direct and shape the entire research process, from funding and design to publication and promotion. This process often begins before the onset of the

research trials when company officials, in consultation with “publication planning” companies, shape the research design. The corporations participating in these networks sometimes manipulate trial design in ways that escape detection by peer review processes, including by conducting a trial drug against a treatment known to be inferior, excluding placebo responders, and testing a drug against too low a dose from a competitor’s drug (Smith, 2005). Many companies also conduct multicentre trials and artificially select for results that are favourable to their interests. In fact, 30 to 40 percent of clinical trials are never reported on because they fail to produce the “correct” results (Healy, 2012; Kirsch, 2010).

Before and during the trials, the corporate network will select target journals and audiences, anticipate peer-review criticism and identify which academics (ideally key “opinion leaders”) are going to be included as authors. Some of these opinion leaders – who are often considered the most distinguished in the field – are creations of the pharmaceutical industry. In part, this is because they are repeatedly selected for ghost authorship, meaning their names may appear on 800 to a 1000 articles (Healy, 2012). In addition to these recruitment efforts, industry can also fund their research and travel, make them investigators on clinical trials, put them on scientific programs, and arrange for them to present at continuing medical education events (Elliot, 2010). It is especially important for publication planners to get involved early if “there is a need to create a market or to create an understanding of unmet need,” otherwise known as “disease mongering” or “selling sickness” (Sismondo, 2009b, 177). A well ghost-managed publication may also include the targeting of conferences and professional meetings where results can be advertised, and the development of other communication opportunities such as “symposia and round-tables, journal supplements, advisory board meetings, slide programs, formulary kits, and more” (Sismondo, 2009b, 176).

The size of the publication planning industry continues to grow. Over 50 different agencies now openly advertise publication planning services, and many of them boast of having hundreds of employees who handle hundreds of manuscripts each year. In fact, the industry is large enough that two international associations of publication planners exist to organize seminars and meetings (the International Society of Medical Planning Professionals, and the International Publication Planning Association). According to Sismondo (2009b, 172), up to 40 percent of “important journal reports of clinical trials of new drugs (and, more anecdotally, perhaps a higher percentage of meeting presentations on clinical

trials) are ghost-managed through to publication.” As a result, not only are most published reports of clinical trials likely to be ghostwritten in some way, but roughly a quarter of published trials are altered so that a negative result for a drug will have been transformed into evidence that the drug is effective and safe (Healy, 2012).

The large number of medical writing and medical education and communication firms, whose tasks are generally limited to ghost-writing and preparing presentations, may be viewed as adjuncts to the more sophisticated work of publication planners. Medical journals should not be seen as dupes in this process, as many editors have extensive dealings with medical writers and publication planners and are fully aware of the process. Ghost-management and publication planning have as a primary goal the extraction of monetary value from scientific research. Needless to say, they amplify research bias because commercial interests are involved at virtually every stage of the research process. These practices should not be seen as a breakdown of ethical standards or editorial oversight; on the contrary, this is a well-organized industry that forms an integral part of the corporate production of knowledge.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT

The corporatization of academic medicine has had a profound impact on researchers, universities and the public. For researchers, it has reduced their ability to pursue independent lines of scholarship, increased restrictions on academic freedom and, in some instances, resulted in severe consequences for scholars who defy this corporate-university complex. The high profile cases of Nancy Olivieri and David Healy in Canada, the details of which have been amply documented elsewhere, are cases in point.¹⁰ For universities and the medical profession, it has produced an unprecedented crisis of credibility in the published literature and severely tarnished the academy as a source of unbiased research. The public impact, however, goes much deeper. For one, underwriting the

¹⁰ For firsthand accounts, see Olivieri (2000) and Healy (2008). For useful overviews, see Schafer (2004) and Woodhouse (2009: Chapter 3). What was most disturbing about the two cases was not the behaviour of the drug companies but the behaviour of the university. When Olivieri and Healy were removed from their positions at the University of Toronto, university and hospital officials failed to recognize – or, at least, failed to acknowledge – that their actions represented outrageous violations of academic freedom. The treatment of Olivieri was especially heinous. Professor Margaret Somerville, Founding Director of the Faculty of Law’s Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University, has stated that the Olivieri case “reads like a horror story on the involvement of corporations in university-based research” (as cited in Woodhouse, 2009, 109). Both cases would eventually become flashpoints for larger political debates about whistle-blowers and the influence of corporate money in academic medicine.

costs of drug research is a costly venture. Canadian taxpayers pay most of the costs of discovering and developing new drugs, and they pay again as consumers for mass marketed treatments that offer little or no benefit. Evidence from France and Canada suggests that no more than 15 percent of new drugs represent any significant therapeutic advantage over those that already exist (Lexchin, 2010). Likewise, some widely used drugs such as antidepressants have been shown to be only marginally more effective than placebos (Kirsch, 2010).

There are also severe risks associated with corporatized medical research. Not only are violations of human research protection rules on the rise, but there is reason to believe that adverse trial events are increasingly treated as “confidential commercial information” and never made public (Washburn, 2005). As well, the many drug scandals that have erupted in recent years illustrate the human toll that can result from corporate sponsorships, compromised clinical trials, research bias and data suppression. In the case of Vioxx, for example, millions of people took the drug before it was exposed as causing a serious risk of heart attack and stroke, a fact that was known to academic and corporate researchers but explained away and eventually suppressed (Schafer, 2008). One estimate suggests that half a million premature deaths in the US alone may have been caused by Vioxx use (Cockburn, 2012). Compromised research and publishing practices also explain, in part, why hundreds of thousands of Americans die each year from “correctly” prescribed drugs (Starfield, 2000). Using data from the Canadian Medical Association, Ferrie (2009) asserts that the comparable figure for Canada is at least 23,000 annually, which represents only the incidence of *reported* deaths. Moreover, the number of adults and children disabled by mental illness continues to rise, with some researchers concluding that pharmaceutical drugs are fuelling, rather than alleviating, the epidemic of mental illness (Whitaker, 2010). With approximately 20 percent of the North American population currently consuming pharmaceutical drugs for anxiety, depression, and other ailments, and with pharmaceuticals and medicine accounting for the largest number of industry-sponsored research contracts in Canadian universities, these issues could not be more pressing (Council of Canadian Academies, 2012).

While there has been some effort to address these problems on the part of medical schools and journals in recent years, most research universities and medical centres remain heavily integrated with and influenced by the pharmaceutical industrial complex. There is also increasing corporate and government pressure to reduce regulations

on drug research and eliminate independent watchdog groups.¹¹ In the corporatized university, marketing and profit continue to replace science as heavily compromised research infiltrates the peer-reviewed literature and the “knowledge” base of physicians.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR RADICAL SOLUTIONS

Critics of the corporatization of higher education generally share the baseline assumption with those who support corporatization, which is that there is no alternative. Given that they see at least some degree of market restructuring is inevitable, the goal is ostensibly to “make peace” with the market while preserving academic values and some semblance of collegial governance. Former Harvard university president Derrick Bok (2003, 176), for example, notes that corporate involvement in university research may warrant radical action, but the only viable response at this point is to “tighten up the rules to limit the damage.” These critics, who often include university administrators and faculty organizations, accept corporatization as a given and focus on adapting to market forces, balancing these forces with the public interest, and finding ways to reconcile commercial and academic values. It follows that they generally advocate targeted reforms or regulatory strategies to address the problems of corporatized research. Reformist approaches call for clear rules and guidelines to “manage” the conflicts of interest inherent in corporate-university alliances and to “regulate” the contracts between researchers and business firms.

In contrast, I would argue that the corrupting influences in academic research today are located in a fundamental antagonism between corporate and academic institutions. Corporate-university conflict is exemplified by the differences between academic and industrial science. The ideals of academic research centre on disinterested inquiry and knowledge sharing, whereas industrial science tends to be motivated by financial gain and encourages research secrecy. Likewise, academic research

¹¹ In 2011, for example, the Harper government put the interests of industry ahead of patient safety when the Canadian Institutes of Health Research eliminated its internationally praised transparency requirement for full public disclosure of trial drug results. The policy, which was just three months old when it was scrapped, required scientists funded by the agency to reveal all their raw data to the public, regardless of what they chose to publish. More recently in 2013, the internationally acclaimed Therapeutics Initiative (TI) based out of the University of British Columbia had all of its funding suspended by the BC government under pressure from Big Pharma. TI had been conducting independent, evidence-based drug reviews for the BC government since the 1990s. It has been reported, for example, that TI’s work indirectly saved an estimated 500 lives in the province with its independent assessment of the drug Vioxx (Canadian Health Coalition, 2011).

relies on peer review and the replicability of results, whereas industrial research does not involve the same verification process. Moreover, the goal of academic research is to advance public knowledge, whereas industrial research aims to produce proprietary knowledge or a product that succeeds in the marketplace. In the area of scientific research at least, the cultures and practices of these two institutional spheres are fundamentally, and irreconcilably, opposed. And, interestingly, neither institution has yet to succeed when they step outside of their respective basic functions: corporations are poor performers when it comes to knowledge sharing and research integrity, and universities are equally inept when it comes to venture capitalism and generating revenue from commercialized research. This incompatibility explains why corporate involvement in university research has had such a corrosive and corrupting impact. In the words of David Healy (2012, 116-117), "insofar as commerce depends on secrecy and acquisitive self-interest rather than free communication of data and other findings, business will inevitably be as inimical to science as the Catholic Church once was to Galileo."

In my view, these deeply-rooted institutional differences suggest that reformist approaches will not and cannot address the problems facing higher education research, and that more radical approaches are necessary. In his work, Arthur Schafer (2004; 2008) notes that corporate-university partnerships are almost "preordained" to produce research findings that favour the interests of business, meaning that the proprietary interests of corporations routinely win out and any attempt to regulate or manage conflicts of interest are destined to be ineffective. Building on Schafer's analysis, I would argue that a more effective, long-term solution for addressing these problems would be an outright prohibition on corporate research funding, at least in those disciplines where the potential for harm is high. While critics of this strategy may claim that denying corporate funding on moral grounds is a slippery slope that violates academic freedom and aggravates the funding crisis in higher education, so long as faculty are not prohibited from (or penalized for) speaking, writing, teaching or researching about a particular topic, restricting a funding source does not violate academic freedom. As Krimsky (2008, 94) explains, academic freedom "is not extinguished in the case that a university community takes responsible and transparent collective action, following accepted governance procedures that prohibit certain funding from entering the university."

The suggestion to prohibit corporate funding is not to suggest that other kinds of sponsored research funding never result in problems, or

that all corporate money is detrimental. The influx of private funding for applied research has, in some instances, accelerated scientific progress to an extent that would not have been possible without such support. But the harms that result from corporate involvement far outweigh the benefits. In addition, when the actual financial costs of participating in corporate research alliances are taken into account, the monetary implications of cutting these ties for universities is far less than is commonly assumed. To participate in corporate research partnerships, universities must spend significant funds to attract sponsors, build labs, purchase equipment, and support a growing number of administrators and other specialists to help broker and negotiate complex agreements.

While a detailed exploration of this issue is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that there has been some movement toward going beyond simply managing or regulating corporate-academic relationships. Some medical schools have restricted ties between drug companies and physicians, and have eliminated industry support for continuing medical education. Medical journals have also made some progress. The journal *Open Medicine*, for example, was formed in 2007 by former editors of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* who resigned from their positions in part due to corporate threats to their editorial autonomy. The journal publishes its material freely online, has completely banned all pharmaceutical and medical device advertising, and has strict rules to prevent ghost-writing (Willinsky, Murray, Kendall and Palepu, 2007). Similarly, in 2009 a collection of editors from the world's leading medical journals openly called for "a complete ban on pharmaceutical and medical device industry funding" to professional medical associations. Drawing attention to the corrosive influence of corporate funding on medical science, these experts argued that "fundamental reforms" were required within medical organizations and academic medical centres in order to protect scientific integrity, patients and "the public's trust" (Rothman et al., 2009, 1368-1372). All of these initiatives point to a growing recognition that academic medicine can and should "divest" from the pharmaceutical industry entirely, and that more radical solutions to the problems associated with the corporatization of university research are required.

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The Tyranny of Work: Employability and the Neoliberal Assault on Education

Jeff Noonan¹ and Mireille Coral²

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the ways in which neoliberal schooling is threatening education. We define education as the development of cognitive and imaginative capacities for understanding of and critical engagement with social reality. Education opens horizons of possibility for collective and individual life-experience and activity by exposing the one-sidedness and contradictions of ruling-value systems. Schooling, by contrast, subordinates thought and imagination to the reproduction of the ruling money-value system, narrowing horizons of possibility for collective and individual life to service to the prevailing structure of power. Our paper draws on our overlapping experiences as educators, one in the university system, the other in the adult education system. In both systems, students' life-requirement for education is subordinated to the capitalist need for compliant wage-labourers and consumers. In opposition to this instrumentalization we will present an interpretation of "real world education" as a unique form of collective work through which teachers and students construct alternatives that can serve as the guiding ideas for new projects for social and political transformation.

KEYWORDS: Education, Schooling, Neoliberalism, Life-Requirements, Capitalism

Neoliberal demands for school reform have emphasised the supreme social importance of education even as they have threatened the ability of school institutions to educate. These demands bring to the fore a contradiction between the liberatory implications of *education* and the ideological effects of *schooling*. Schools both enable students to develop and expand their capacities to imagine and think beyond the established

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limits of what ruling classes define as good, just, meaningful, and true, and at the same time try to produce citizens who confine their thinking and imagination to the ideological meaning of those norms. Education builds critical consciousness and political agency, while schooling aims to keep students' horizons confined to the given world, its class, racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies, its reward systems. Education enables students to expose social contradictions, schooling tries to keep people blind to their existence. Neoliberalism has intervened in an openly partisan way on behalf of schooling against education. As we will reveal, neoliberalism has been actively attacking the educational mission of schools at all levels of the education system, but especially secondary and post-secondary. If the neoliberal agenda were to be realised, the primary role of schools would be reduced to preparing students for a life as little but complacent alienated workers, quietly content with the ephemeral pleasures of consumer society.

There are, fortunately, both political and philosophical barriers to the success of this project. Politically, there are the manifold forms of resistance that students and teachers are capable of mounting. The last three years in Canada have witnessed intensified struggles against the neoliberal schooling agenda. In Quebec, post-secondary students organized a massive, months long strike, ostensibly against tuition hikes but in reality against the neoliberal attempt to further commodify and instrumentalize education. In 2012 in Ontario, tens of thousands of teachers, along with many student supporters, waged a brave campaign against draconian legislation designed to not only undermine their bargaining rights but to make them compliant executors of an educational policy imposed by government. In the spring of 2014, teachers in British Columbia struck to defend their working conditions and the educational integrity of their schools.³ Philosophically, schooling presupposes the development of cognitive capacities that once awoken, by their very nature, cannot be limited in their exercise to providing unthinking support for any prescribed, ideological agenda. Schooling of even the most narrow and instrumental sort must teach students to read and write and critically evaluate claims. The development of the capacities for politically engaged social self-conscious agency cannot be avoided, no matter

³ It is not our purpose to provide a careful political analysis of these various struggles. For cogent and concise commentary, see Nesbitt, 2012; Cooke, 2013; Camfield, 2012; Brett and Mehreen, 2012. Information on the settlement agreed to by the British Columbia teachers can be found at the website of the British Columbia Teacher's Federation: <https://www.bctf.ca/>.

how narrow and instrumental the scope of schooling. Hence, there is always space within schools – bureaucratic and authoritarian as they are already at the primary and secondary level and as they are becoming at the post-secondary level – to educate. Educating, we will demonstrate, frees students from intellectual subservience to established norms and structures, not by dogmatic imposition of a radical oppositional agenda, but simply by enabling them to question, think, evaluate, and communicate.

Our argument will be developed in three steps. In the first, we will elaborate upon the contradiction between schooling and education. In the second, we will examine the recent history of neoliberal school reforms in the Ontario secondary school and university systems, concentrating on the way in which the “employability agenda” is an attack on the educational mission of schools. Unlike some critics of schooling (most famously, Ivan Illich) we do not argue that schools should be abandoned in favour of the emancipatory possibilities of popular education. Instead, we will argue that the contradictory nature of schools means that there is a space to import and adapt popular education methods into the institution. In the concluding section, we will provide an example of how we were able to use the adult educational classroom as a space for the development of a project in which students, through their own efforts, transformed their experience of school from an oppressive system of imposed rules to a free space for the development of critical consciousness, political agency, and non-alienated labour.

SCHOOLING AND EDUCATING

Our argument proceeds from a contradiction in school institutions. The contradiction is between the socially reproductive demands governments and business leaders try to impose upon them and their educational mission. Education frees cognitive and imaginative capacities from subservience to the established social reality, while schooling seeks to conform expectations, imagination, and thought to the given reality, with all of its tensions, hierarchies, and injustices accepted as normal and natural. One might say, following Gramsci, that schooling is a set of practices through which the ruling class tries to extend its hegemony over new generations, while education is always at least implicitly a set of practices that enables students to develop the critical consciousness and political agency that allow them to contest hegemony (Gramsci, 1971, 26-43). Let us examine both sides of this contradiction in more detail.

Schooling is a politically motivated socialisation process through which the ruling powers hope to ensure conflict-free social reproduction by masking the roles power, force and domination play in establishing and maintaining the given social reality. This socialization process involves the inculcation of basic forms of self-discipline (learning to conform one's demands to the established structure of rules in the various public and private spaces that constitute society), the development of deferential attitudes towards authorities, the cultivation of basic inter-personal skills needed to get along more or less peacefully with others, and the acquisition of basic intellectual skills required for productive functioning in social and economic life. Above all else, the schooling process transmits the ruling value system of the society it serves to younger generations. As Erich Fromm argues, the purpose of schooling is to "qualify the individual to function in the role he is to play later on in society...to mould his character in such a way that...his desires coincide with the necessities of his social order." (Fromm, 1969, 284).

The ruling value system of any society justifies the prevailing structure of power and wealth and the rewards and sanctions it makes available and imposes as supremely good, the only sound and sane basis for the formation of individual goals and life plans. To the extent that young people internalise the ruling value system, they bend their efforts to finding a place within the existing structure of power, challenging it only in terms of its failure to provide in practice what is promised in theory, but never in terms of its overall coherence or the substance of the values it affirms. In other words, if the ruling value system is in fact internalised, the capacity for social criticism is dampened, because the political imagination is prevented from exploring different possibilities of social life-organization. If the political imagination is thus hampered in its exercise, the political intellect refuses to accept the real possibility of radically different and better ways of living and instead confines itself to working within the established social reality. Thus, confined, it cannot discover the structural contradictions that stand in the way of realizing the values of freedom, equity, justice, and democracy that liberal-capitalist order claims to serve but cannot coherently realize.

Before students are subjected to alienated capitalist work conditions, schools, in the words of Ivan Illich (1970, 46), "pre-alienate" young people:

Young people are pre-alienated by schools that isolate them while they pretend to be both producers and consumers of their own

knowledge, which is conceived of as a commodity put on the market in school. School makes alienation preparatory for life, thus depriving education of reality and life of activity. School prepares for the alienating institutionalization of life by teaching the need to be taught. Once this lesson is learned, people...close themselves off to the surprises life offers when it is not predetermined by institutional deformation.”

Of all the alienating effects school produces, none is more damaging to the formation of individual and collective agency than the belief that making oneself marketable to potential employers is both a primary duty of social life and a natural necessity. Once that idea has been instilled, fear of compromising one’s marketability to potential employers strongly impedes the formation of desires for fundamental social changes necessary to abolish alienated labour.

While we agree with Illich’s critique of schooling, and while we believe that education can and should be pursued outside the walls of school institutions through a variety of experiments in popular education, we do not agree with his “de-schooling” agenda.⁴ Schools, as we have emphasised, are contradictory institutions. All people are thinking beings, and thinking beings cannot be *schooled* without at the same time having their imaginative and cognitive capacities developed and extended. Since students are educated at the same time as they are schooled, their capacity for transformative political agency can developed within their walls, the “pre-alienating” intentions of school authorities notwithstanding. Schools are therefore sites of struggle between authorities who want to limit them to purposes of social reproduction and the reality-transforming implications of education. Schools are politically essential because they create intellectual space and time free from the very social forces whose demands students are being prepared to accept. One cannot prepare students for life in the contemporary world without cultivating in them basic literacy and numeracy skills, without enabling them to distinguish causes from effects, without developing in them basic communication skills and the ability to negotiate diverse and unfamiliar environments, and without discussing values like freedom, equality, democracy, and human rights. Even if the later values are defined

⁴ Both authors have been involved, individually and together, with a variety of popular education initiatives and projects. Popular education allows for freedom from institutional formalities, bureaucratic administration, and government interference, but also faces challenges reaching wide numbers of people. The authors conclude that the struggle for education against schooling needs to be pursued both outside and inside the institutional walls.

operationally in terms of the norms of liberal-capitalist democracies, and even if all the basic intellectual skills listed above are taught in the most narrow and instrumental manner, once they have been developed, they cannot be controlled by external authorities. If one can read, one can read anything readable; once one can perform basic mathematical operations, one can apply them beyond the narrow range of examples used to teach them; once one can talk and communicate with others, one can discover other perspectives and goals, and once one learns the meaning of democracy, one can begin to ask whether its current instantiation is adequate to the idea. These basic intellectual capacities, therefore, are the basis of the educational mission of schools.

Education is the process whereby the cognitive and imaginative capacities of human beings are developed beyond their given range and depth, freed from subservience to the ruling value system, for the sake of enabling more comprehensive understanding of what there is to be known. Education and freedom are related in two ways. First, the development of cognitive and imaginative capacities is freed from programmed service to ruling value systems. Second, educated people become free to think for themselves in continually expanding scope and critical depth. Once education has drawn out the latent imaginative and cognitive capacities of the human brain, the subsequent development of those capacities can no longer in principle be programmed by institutional authority, because to become educated means to become aware of the freedom of thought in relation to its object.

What we mean can be illustrated by unpacking the implications of the colloquial phrase, "I'll think it over." Rather than just accede to whatever request has been made, the person transforms the request from an externally imposed demand to an internally constituted object of thought. As a thought-object the request is submitted to the critical inspection of the thinker's mind, which can consider its legitimacy in various dimensions and weigh its value against alternative considerations. The person who thinks something over does not simply do what he or she has been told to do; rather, he or she explores the reasons behind the request and the reasons supporting compliance or refusal. That which she ultimately does is her decision, not the external authority's and she can account for what she does on the basis of the reasons she herself determines. This capacity to think critically presupposes understanding of the language in which the request has been made, the ability to weigh consequences, the capacity to judge the request against a life-value standard, and the ability to understand the effects of compliance on the natural and social

worlds of which one is a dependent and interdependent member. These are generic capacities, but they have potentially profound social and political implications – by unhinging thought from service to imposed system-requirements, education frees peoples mindless subservience to social power.

The specific values of critical consciousness and political agency affirmed and cultivated by the traditions of popular education are built into the very nature of education, even when it takes place in school institutions. Although *schooling* tries to exclude these values, *schools* cannot, because schooling presupposes some degree of education and education is always subversive of mechanical incorporation of ruling ideologies into students' minds. As Apple understands, "counter hegemonic activities [are possible] in...schools [as well as] communities." (Apple, 2001, 231). He reminds educators that society is not a place of happy cooperation, but a site of struggle and contestation where working people fight for advancements. (Apple, 1990, 96). Teachers who take their role as educators seriously recognise that, as the great popular educators Paulo Freire and Myles Horton argued, neutrality in education is not possible (Horton and Freire,1990). Educators take sides, but not for one party as against another in any narrow and dogmatic way, but against the attempts of ideological schooling to present social life as fixed, its hierarchies natural. Once students understand that social life is historical, that the ways things are is the way they have been made to be by various struggles, they can work out for themselves in whose interests these hierarchies are maintained. At that point, they can insert themselves into the on-going history of struggle without needing to be told on which side their interests lie. Education is thus political but not in a way that "silences in the name of orthodoxy [or] imposes itself on students while undermining dialogue, deliberation and critical engagement." (Giroux, 2012). Education, popular or institutional, opens students to dialogue about a reality that schooling presents as beyond discussion

Dialogue is essential to any genuine educational process, for it is only through dialogue that the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student – the form of relationship that makes students resent teachers and impedes the educational process – is broken down. As Horton explains, "I think that any kind of dialogue...means that you don't have inferiors and superiors all in the same conversation... But you respect each other's experiences and you aren't trying to use that dialogue to hornswoggle people into accepting your views, because you think it's good for people. It's a bottoms-up operation instead of

a top-down operation. And it's everybody on the same level trying to come up together." (Horton, 2003, 274-275). Although school institutions militate against dialogue, the classroom remains a space shielded from the prying eyes of administrators. Therefore, as Cunningham (1989) and Quigley (2006) note, the classroom can subvert, to some extent, the aim of schooling to simply reproduce oppressive social and cultural relationships. Because the teacher is alone with her students in the classroom she can, if she chooses, embed effective popular education practices – basing the curriculum in the life experience of the learners, respecting for the knowledge people bring to the classroom, opening dialogue among equals, and recognizing that education is always political and always on the side of freeing people from oppressive hierarchies.

To sum up, any genuine educational process, whether within schools or outside of them, enables students to transform their self-understanding. From thinking of themselves as objects of power, educated people learn to think of themselves as subjects, as people capable of intervening, as individuals or as members of social movements, in the determination of the social reality they inhabit. Education, (as opposed to schooling) thus always threatens unjust value systems and institutions. Even in the institutionalized classroom educators can put into practice the legacy of one of the great popular education movements of Canadian history, the Antigonish movement. As both Alexander (1997) and Lotz (2005) remind teachers, that legacy is one of encouraging critical thinking about established structures of oppression and alternatives to them and never acquiescing in mere training and adaptation to the system. That sort of education, of course, is a potential threat to liberal-capitalist reality. The aim of neoliberal educational "reforms," to which we now turn, is thus above all to eliminate as much education from schools as possible.

NEOLIBERAL SCHOOLING AND THE TYRANNY OF WORK

The historical origins of neoliberalism tell us much of relevance about its educational reform agenda. Neoliberalism is a set of prescriptions for managing capitalism that emerged in the 1970's as a response to the "stagflation" crisis. The cause of the crisis was attributed to the failure of labour markets to adequately discipline labour and control its costs. Unions were judged too strong, welfare state support for the unemployed too generous, and public services and state enterprises too inefficient. Attacking all three became central to the neoliberal project. Referring to its first systematic elaboration in Thatcher's England, Harvey

lists its core goals as “confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility, the privatization of public enterprises, reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurial initiative, and creating a favourable business climate.” (Harvey, 2005, 23). The intended effect of this package of reforms was to make individual workers more dependent upon market forces and thus more willing to accept terms of employment (lower wages, less benefits, less control over the nature and pace of work) favourable to the owners. As Albo, Gindin, and Panitch argue, neoliberal changes to labour laws, combined with the material pressure exerted by public and private austerity, have “compelled workers to become more dependent on the market as individuals so as to limit their ability to contest the social relations of the capitalist market as a class.” (Albo, Gindin and Panitch, 2011, 90). Neoliberal educational reforms, at the secondary and post-secondary level, extend these goals into school institutions. There are external and internal drivers of this agenda.

Externally, financial pressure and market forces are used to squeeze institutions so as to encourage or force compliance with the internal transformations necessary. For example, the Harris government, elected in 1995 and the first Ontario government to pursue an openly neoliberal agenda, slashed the education budget by \$400 million (MacLellan, 2009, 60). In the Canadian university sector, public funding as a proportion of operating revenue has been going down and tuition going up (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2012). In order to meet higher tuition costs more and more students must borrow to finance their education (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013). The deep debt students find themselves in gives them an understandable interest in prioritising future employment over the development of critical consciousness. Of course, there is no mechanical relationship between debt and the internalization of neoliberal ideology about employability, but it would be naive for educators to ignore the real economic pressures students face.

Neoliberal reformers do not, of course, aim to abolish schools or even eliminate all public funding, but to transform expectations about the place and purpose of public institutions. Neoliberalism has facilitated a move towards what Slaughter and Rhoades call “academic capitalism.” “Academic capitalism” does not necessarily involve privatization, but works more by “a redefinition of public space and of appropriate activity in that space. The configuration of state resources has changed, providing colleges and universities with fewer unrestricted public revenues and encouraging them to seek out and generate

alternative sources of revenue.”(Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004, 306). The new private revenue sources schools and universities are forced to seek come at the price of conformity of curriculum and pedagogy to labour and commodity market demands. Instead of educating people for the sake of the free development of imaginative and cognitive capacities, schools are encouraged to produce compliant employees happy to have whatever job is made available. Let us now examine the details of the effects neoliberal school reform has had on Ontario secondary schools and universities.

THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA AND ONTARIO'S ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

For our purposes the neoliberal assault on public education in Ontario begins with the Mike Harris government's "Common Sense Revolution." Ironically, although premised on the neoliberal credo of less government, it actually mandated more government interference in schools. The Harris government "reconstituted school governance, standardized and centralized testing, [imposed] massive curricular reform, strict systems of accountability, and the intru[ded]...market goals into public schooling" (MacLellan, 2009, 66). The Common Sense Revolution was a political assault on the power of schools to educate.

Instead of education, the Harris reforms attempted to make hegemonic a very narrow conception of schooling as training. As Sears (2003, 11) points out, the "agenda for education reform seeks to reorient schooling so that the individual develops a self in relation to the market rather than the state." A case in point is the 1998 Science and Technology curriculum for elementary students, which saw the inclusion of skills described as important for the workplace. These skills are often learned by rote and are easily tested, thus having the effect of standardizing the curriculum and exerting tighter control over the work of teachers, making teachers "accountable" to government rather than students' life-requirement for education (MacLellan, 2009; McNay, 2000). Under Harris, highly standardized curriculum framed students as nothing more than job seekers motivated only to become aware of the fixed social realities to which they must conform. Schools were reconceptualised as manufacturing facilities making future employees: "the key to the meal ticket of the nation."(Bouchard, 2006, 165).

While the Liberal government, first elected in 2002, increased spending on education 24 percent between 2003 and 2008, they did nothing substantial to reverse the assault on the educational mission

of schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Standardized testing continues in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10, administered through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), mirrored at the post-secondary level by the Higher Education Quality Assurance Council (HEQAC). The future employability of students remains the core educational objective as outlined in the Ministry document *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010). Arguing that developing the “learning skills and work habits needed to succeed in school and in life begins early in a child’s schooling,” and that these work habits and learning skills may be “strengthened through the achievement of the curriculum expectations” of Grades 1 through 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 12), the document goes on to provide a list of employability skills as defined by the Conference Board of Canada. These skills focus on “personal management skills that facilitate growth...and teamwork skills that enhance productivity” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 12). Sample behaviours include being responsible, adaptable, and able to work in teams while completing assigned projects. A more complex list of competencies as outlined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is also cited in the Ministry document as necessary for student success. This list is prefaced with an acknowledgement of the complex demands of living in a globalized and modern economy, the need to make sense of rapidly changing technologies, as well as the need to make decisions that represent collective challenges: for example, “the need to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and prosperity with social equity” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 13).

The sample behaviours associated with these skills are organized into three “categories of competency,”: “Using Tools Interactively,” “Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups,” and “Acting Autonomously” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 13). The subordination of education to schooling for the sake of employability might seem to be contradicted by the inclusion of the ability “to defend and assert rights, limits, interests, and needs.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, 13). Despite appearances, this invocation of rights, limits, interests, and needs has nothing to do with developing the capacity of students to identify ways in which existing structures and value systems undermine rights and freedoms. The defense and assertion of rights and interests is framed as the acts of lone individuals content with the existing value system and institutions, not as political subjects motivated to overcome the structural injustices of liberal-capitalism.

This emphasis on employability is repeated in the adult education sector of the secondary school system. Unschooling adults who became injured or unemployed and who looked to the public school system for an opportunity to earn a high school diploma did not fare well under the Harris reforms. According to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF), the Harris government cut funding to adult day schools by 70 percent; as a result, 85 percent of the student population disappeared between 1995 and 1997, with a net loss of 70,957 students between 1994 and 2001 (OSSTF, 2014). Many of these people, particularly injured workers, were sent to private business colleges to earn diplomas of questionable value quickly (Social Policy in Ontario, 2010). Although this practice has been stopped, adult education in Ontario remains in need of a “home,” in the words of Kathleen Wynne, then-Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education (Ministry of Education, 2005, 1). In the case of secondary education, courses taught in an adult high school use the same curriculum guidelines as those taught in any other high school, despite the great differences in age and life-experience between adult and adolescent learners. In the case of adult education, then, the curriculum that reproduces the neoliberal values is being imposed on the very people – unemployed and injured workers – whose lives have been most painfully disrupted by neoliberalism.

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE UNIVERSITY

When we turn our attention from secondary schools to universities, changes in the internal governance and administration take on a significance they do not have in the secondary schools. Given the fact that universities traditionally have greater autonomy from government policy than secondary schools, and thus have had greater latitude for the cultivation of socially critical dispositions and capacities, aligning university education with neoliberal objectives requires governance changes that compromise institutional autonomy and academic freedom. One can learn a great deal about the goals of neoliberal reform by examining changes in the administrations that are expected to impose them.

The first noticeable change in administration is its growing size. Noam Chomsky, speaking to a group of unionized adjunct faculty in Pittsburgh, described the process: “In the past 30 to 40 years there has been a very sharp increase in the proportion of administrators to faculty and students...[who are] very highly paid. This includes professional administrators like deans...who used to be faculty members that took a couple of years off and then go back to faculty;

now they're mostly professional, who then have to hire sub-deans, secretaries, etc." (Chomsky, 2014, 2). More important than the growing size of the administration, is the way in which the professionalization Chomsky notes increasingly alienates them from the faculty and students. As senior administrators become more professionalized and more highly paid, they begin to change their sense of mission, from providing academic leadership to managing finances and promoting institutional growth (in student numbers, in the value of research grants and other income, in the architectural footprint of the institution). One mid-level administrator interviewed by a research team in the UK studying the effects of "New Managerialism" in the university system describes the change she felt in herself: "Very often when I go to work I have to pinch myself and say 'Look, I'm sure I originally was an academic, but gosh now I feel like an accountant, I spend all my time...talking about issues about money...the academics and the quasi-managers are at logger heads with the real, full-time managers who have a different career structure and a different career path.'" (Deem et. al., 2007, 179).

These changes to the structure of management are not driven solely by forces endogenous to the university, but have been encouraged by government policies that openly challenge the capacity of universities to govern themselves according to their founding mission – the creation and dissemination of knowledge that serves the public good. Universities have been mostly compliant with these demands, rushing to undertake costly and time wasting program reviews to prove their worthiness for government funding. The recently announced "Differentiation Strategy" for Ontario universities and colleges forces every university and college in the province to submit a "Strategic Mandate Agreement" detailing the ways in which the institution is aligning its objectives and strengths with government priorities. The Government of Ontario (2013, 10) report asserts:

"differentiation strengthens alignment between regional development needs and defined institutional mandates. This will advance innovative partnerships and programs that serve the distinct Ontario communities to which institutions are connected, as well as broader provincial needs. This alignment will ensure that students graduate with skills that respond to local and provincial labour market needs and contribute to social development. In areas that align with institutional capacity, these partnerships may be global in scope."

The real implications are clear: only those programs and institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to government policy can be assured of future funding. The overall objective is to contain costs by eliminating duplication in the system, forcing universities to specialise on narrow bands of expertise in contradiction to the very nature of a university. The Differentiation Policy follows directly from the 2011 Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services (the Drummond Report) which explicitly recommended "differentiation" as a means of using resources efficiently and "encouraging and rewarding quality" as a means of ensuring compliance with government imposed-objectives (Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, 2012, Ch.7).

In order to tie the goals of schooling more tightly to labour market demand, the traditional rights of professors must also be challenged. The attack on academic labour takes a number of forms. Tenure track positions are on the decline or, as in England since 1988, no longer available. In the United States in 2007 the percentage of tenured and tenure-track professors had declined to 31 percent, while precarious part time academic labour had increased to 50.3 percent (Wilson, 2010, 1). As in the private sector, employees without job security are more easily managed. By subjecting faculty to the discipline of academic labour markets, in which supply always far exceeds demand, their willingness and ability to develop in their students the capacity to understand and critique the social forces driving neoliberal reforms (threatening the student's future as well) is undermined.

Every proposed change, from centralizing control over the university in senior administrative hands to raising enrolments through on-line courses is justified the same way: better preparing students for the real world of tough competition. As Alan Sears (2014) has recently argued, "Ultimately, the goal of this transformation is a university system that, along with certain skills and knowledge, teaches students: "You are entitled to nothing. You have no right to anything you cannot afford, and you will only be able to afford things through a life of constant hustle." In other words, students are being prepared for a life in which their personal freedom is reduced to forced self-reinvention at the behest of labour market demand. Free choice of life-project remains as a justifying slogan, but is excoriated as irrational if it is exercised to choose courses of study for which there is no market demand. In the neoliberal universe interest and enjoyment count for nothing; life is about making rational investments in oneself, the good of life is maximizing returns on investments. A recent study of the employment outcomes of Canadian

university graduates by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce makes this point clear: “Another important driver of the relatively low return on education is field of study. For students shelling out thousands in higher-learning costs, a university degree can be viewed as an investment with upfront expenses, and a stream of future benefits.” (Benjamin and Enenajor, 2013). Although it purports to concern itself with graduates’ income, its real concern, since it is studying labour in a capitalist economy, is how much money-value employees create (wages and salaries track labour productivity, such that one can be paid more only if one is producing more for the firm).

Thus we arrive at the real truth of neoliberal educational reforms at the secondary and post-secondary level – their mandate is to produce productive and compliant workers that will produce more money-value for appropriation by the ruling class, at the expense of understanding the real dynamics and contradictions of this process and their capacity to change it. The real target of these reforms is not any particular subject or discipline, but the time and space that education requires. To conclude, we will examine how education itself is an example of non-alienated work, and thus itself a momentary liberation from the coercive objectifications to which labour markets subject people.

EDUCATION AS AN EXAMPLE OF NON-ALIENATED WORK

If neoliberal education reformers are to be believed, the primary interest of young people is to allow their life-horizons to be determined by the changing demands of labour markets. Satisfying labour market demand becomes a moral imperative that overrides the openness to the future and freedom from imposed routine that, in propitious social circumstances, generates the feelings of freedom associated with youth. The neoliberal school speaks the language of goals, opportunities, and self-realization, but defines these values in terms of finding paid employment – and then being “flexible” enough to start all over again when market conditions change. In this way, neoliberal schooling confuses being a free subject with being an object of labour markets.

Our point is not that students can afford to be nonchalant about their future in a society where basic life-necessities are priced commodities. Rather, our point is that education enables people to understand the contradiction between the labour on offer in capitalist labour markets and the human life-requirements for meaningful, socially valuable, non-alienated labour. Not only does education help people grasp this

contradiction, it is itself a form of non-alienated. Non-alienated labour, for Marx, is essentially a labour of self-creation through world transformation, undertaken freely, that is, without the compulsion of natural or social necessity (Marx, 1975, 274). Through non-alienated labour processes, human capacities are developed for their own sake and the contribution their realization makes to others' ability to satisfy their own life-requirements. When educational institutions and students are adequately funded, when the life-values of cognitive and imaginative development govern the organization of the institutions, and when the pedagogical methods are collaborative and interactive, education is a non-alienated labour process through which learners and teachers together transform themselves by expanding their capacities for understanding, imagining new social relations and criticising the impediments that stand in the way of the realization of those relations. Both transform themselves by meeting and overcoming the limitations that defined their initial levels of understanding. At the same time, not only their own development as individuals, but their willingness and capacity to contribute to social well-being only fully develops when educational activity is experienced as free, un-coerced, non-alienated labour. To illustrate our point we want to share an example of a collaborative project we were involved in with adult learners.

As teachers of adults in a city that is experiencing the painful fallout of neoliberal policies, especially unemployment as a result of deindustrialization, we looked for a way to break the reproductive processes at work in schooling. To this end, Coral, a teacher in an adult high school, carved out a space within a course the Ontario Social Sciences curriculum mandated her to teach – Canadian Politics and Citizenship – for a critical discussion of neoliberalism. The class studied the hallmarks of neoliberalism: tax breaks for the wealthy, upward redistribution of income, governments consequently starved of revenue for social programmes, downward social mobility and the weakening of unions and workers' organizations as a function of the globalization of capital. Interest in this list of hallmarks led to a request by the class for a more systematic historical and theoretical discussion of neoliberalism and its implications for people in their situation. Noonan, a professor at the University of Windsor, was invited to speak to the class. He led a collective discussion about neoliberalism that revealed it to be the ideology shaping the economy and public policy of Windsor. The discussion spurred the students to begin to think differently about their own social situations. Thus were

the aims and methods of popular education brought into the school institution. Instead of being “instructed” the students were engaged in a back and forth conversation in which their own experience enabled them to make sense of the historical and theoretical points under discussion. With the new knowledge of the world they were developing they fashioned a new self-understanding. They began to abandon the sense of victimhood inculcated in them for a sense of their own political agency.

The day of the lecture ended with Noonan and Coral inviting the class to tell their stories of what it means to live under neoliberalism. This ending proved in fact to be the beginning of a new project in which students discovered that education is not synonymous with schooling and work is not identical to alienated paid labour. The students decided that they would take up our invitation and tell their stories of life under neoliberalism and that this would become the major assignment for the semester. In other words, they ceased to rely on the teacher-authorities to tell them what to do to pass the course and instead took the future direction of the course into their own hands, working with Coral rather than just listening to her. Students wrote about their life experiences: factory closures, unemployment, accessing dwindling social services for themselves and for loved ones with special needs, living on meagre social services, and the deterioration of neighbourhoods. The undertaking and completion of this assignment – writing the stories and reading each other’s stories – was itself a counter-hegemonic process. Decisions regarding how the stories would be organized, illustrated, bound, categorized, and titled were collectively made, as was the initial decision to write the book for the major assignment. In the end, as a class, we decided how the assignment would be marked, collectively creating a marking rubric.

The generic intellectual capacities cultivated through education *enabled* the students to not only re-describe their own experience, understand its causes more clearly, and begin to think of themselves as subjects capable of doing something about it, but also to look upon education as a process in which they are active subjects and not just the objects of administrative power. At one point in the book-making process, the students, in a deep discussion about how to organize the stories while Coral typed, looked over at her and laughingly commented that the roles had reversed: the teacher had become the typist and the students were making all the decisions. “Don’t worry,” they reassured me. “We’ve got this under control.”

As we emphasised in Section Two, this project was not about imposing upon students our own beliefs about neoliberalism. Instead, it incorporated the popular education practice of co-exploration of a problem, using classroom space and time as a matrix within which students could develop their own critical attitudes towards neoliberalism's effects on their lives. We understood that adult students are not children – they are living on a daily basis in a social order where their wages are falling, their livelihoods are being exported to other countries for socio-economic reasons they did not initially understand – and that their life experiences had a place in the classroom, connecting the curriculum to the actual lives of the students and empowering the students to speak openly about what they know best: their own life experience. As a result, the classroom became a place where this hegemony could be critically examined and contested. As the course progressed, students began to request classes in “how to vote,” more specifically, how to make sense of the differences between parties, how to make sense of election campaigns, and how to critically examine campaign promises. One man asked to stay after school to talk about how he could “get more involved.” Later that week, he walked to the local workers' action centre to sign up as a volunteer. A student who had been unemployed for a while and had shared with the class the humiliation he experienced applying for welfare, made a comment one day that resonated around the room: “This is making me feel better. It's good to know I'm not a loser.” It also motivated the foundation, by Coral and Noonan and some of the most active students, to found the Windsor Peoples School, a popular education experiment housed in the Windsor Workers' Action Centre.

The project we undertook in the adult high school classroom challenged the reduction of education to schooling. In doing so, students discovered the class structures and ruling value systems underlying as social causes the challenges they faced every day in their own lives. Our educational objectives had less to do with employability and more to do with living in this historical moment. Our concern as teachers was for engaging students in a form of educational labour that enabled them to transform themselves from passive objects to active political subjects, not because we told them to do so, but because their new knowledge spurred a hunger for solutions to the social and economic problems they faced. One man's comment on his experience in the class was most telling: “Finally, I'm learning something in school that I can use to live my life!” That seemed a most appropriate educational objective for a high school curriculum.

This new critical insight was achieved within a school designed almost explicitly to reprogram adults for labour markets. Yet, their own experience, combined with the basic imaginative and cognitive capacities their classes enabled them to develop, led them to an investigation of the causes of their situations, which transformed their self-understanding. Formerly, they thought of themselves as objects, whether of bad luck, bad choices, or bad circumstances; subsequently they thought of themselves as individual and collective subjects whose value as human beings demanded social changes. As they became clearer about the causes of their objective situation, these students – often decried as lazy immigrants, as criminal, as addicts, developed a tremendous capacity and appetite for work, just because in their book project they could both “contemplate themselves in a world they had created” and feel themselves as capable of making a (small but real) contribution to solving the problems of the community which affected them as individuals (Marx, 1975, 276).

It might be objected that this exercise achieved no practical result; the problems that the students faced before the class they faced after, the ‘real world’ was still there and the limited range of opportunities they faced was still limited. They would have been better served by job-specific retraining or apprenticeships that focused on real skills. Aside from the obvious rejoinder that there is no contradiction between becoming educated and skilled, the deeper point that must be made in response is that the objection assimilates the entire value of human life to being valued as a commodity by a potential employer. This collapse of the difference between the life-value of experience, activity, and interaction and the money-value of skills that you can sell to an employer is precisely the “tyranny of work” under capitalist society. That these students learned to take initiative when they had been told to obey authority their whole lives, that they learned to cooperate when the instinct of many when confronted with a different idea than their own was to fight, and that they *enjoyed*, for the first time in their lives, learning something because they could feel it making a difference in their lives is essentially relevant to the future course of their lives.

Moreover, it is obviously not the case that learning to understand society as a field of problems (as opposed to fixed commands to which one must comply), to cooperate with others to understand those problems, to learn to communicate and convince others (and be convinced in turn by them), and to think about concrete solutions that go beyond the established structures of power and ruling value system, are *useless*.

These are the capacities by which human history is developed. The neoliberal subordination of education to schooling says, in effect, there was once history, but now that our class has achieved ascendancy, not only must history stop, *no one is to be enabled to understand even that there once was history.* Neoliberalism conflates agency with acquiescence, student life-requirements with passive compliance with system demands, life-value with the production of money-value for the delectation of the appropriating class, and the “real-world” with the circuits of labour and commodity markets. What is on offer with neoliberal educational reforms is not, therefore, education for the real-world, but the attempt to permanently impede people, save for the select few chosen to rule, from understanding reality.

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Why Do Governments Adopt Neoliberal Education Policies? Critical Theory on Policy Movement in the Context of Contemporary Reform in Mexico

Paul Bocking¹

ABSTRACT: Both the fields of critical human geography and comparative education have developed substantial thinking on the spread of neoliberal public policy across national and subnational boundaries. Key means for explaining policy transfer include external advocacy from powerful transnational authorities such as the World Bank and the OECD, ideological influence in the form of think tanks, and domestic structural-institutional pressures in the form of the interests of national business elites. The relative strength of opposition groups such as teachers' unions and pro-public education organizations is a significant counterbalancing factor. In this paper I investigate the relative weight of each factor behind education policy development in the context of Mexico's contemporary adoption of neoliberal 'education quality' reform. I focus on the so-called 'Alliance for Quality Education' enacted in 2008 under the 2006-2012 Calderon administration, subsequently amended into the constitution under the 2012-2016 government of Enrique Peña Nieto. These measures include among others, the tying of teacher salary and job security to an expanded regime of student standardized testing, and increased private sector involvement in the public provision and financing of education from kindergarten to secondary level education. The neoliberalization of public education has advanced significantly in Mexico, especially due to the advocacy of Mexican business lobbyists facilitated by ideologically predisposed state officials. However due to a conjuncture of factors, their success is threatened by a consolidating pro-public education teachers' movement.

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KEYWORDS: Mexico, Neoliberalism, Education Reform, Teachers, Policy Transfer, Unions

Critical human geography and comparative education have developed substantial thinking on the means through which neoliberal public policy spreads across national and subnational boundaries. Key means for explaining policy transfer include external advocacy from powerful transnational authorities such as the World Bank and Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD), ideological influence in the form of think tanks and powerful lobby groups, and domestic structural-institutional pressures, in the form of both the interests of national elites as well as the relative strength of opposition groups such as teachers' unions and pro-public education organizations. In this paper, I investigate the relative weight of each factor behind education policy development in the context of Mexico's contemporary adoption of neoliberal 'education quality' reform. I focus on the so-called 'Alliance for Quality Education' (ACE) regulations enacted in 2008 under the 2006-2012 Calderon administration, subsequently amended into the education statutes of the national constitution under the subsequent government of Enrique Peña Nieto in December 2012 and enshrined through legislation in September 2013. These measures include the tying of teacher salary and job security to an expanded regime of student standardized testing, and increased private sector involvement in the public provision of education from kindergarten to secondary level education. These practices strongly resemble both policies advocated by the latest World Bank and OECD education strategy papers (*Making Schools Work*, 2011; *Getting it Right*, 2012) and the demands of domestic corporate education lobby groups like Mexicanos Primero.

I argue that the prominent role of the World Bank and the OECD in articulating education policy adopted by the Mexican government rests significantly on a convergence with the agenda of Mexico's powerful domestic business lobby, which is interested in privatizing public education. The importance of these external groups is principally to offer a technocratic form of legitimation, above the partisanship of Mexican electoral politics and interest groups. The close ties of the current secretary-general of the OECD, José Ángel Gurría, with the administration of Peña Nieto is an additional, more coincidental factor which elevates the OECD to greater prominence than it would otherwise likely have in influencing Mexico's education policy. However the rollout of the agenda of these powerful domestic and external elite forces has been uneven because of Mexico's

democratic teachers' movement, which has gained strength as the official state-aligned leadership of the teachers' union has weakened.

This empirical study brings together theories on neoliberal policy movement from critical geography, especially Peck (2002, 2011), Harvey (2007) and Prince (2012) and the 'Globally Structured Agenda for Education' (GSAE) approach within comparative education, influenced by Steiner-Khamsi (2000, 2012), Verger (2009), Carnoy (1999), Klees (2008) and Dale (2000), to consider the actors in neoliberal education reform and the relative importance of their roles in the context of Mexico. Having identified "the agents of transfer" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, 164), I will study the extent to which 'borrowing' states actually implement foreign policy, and how this process reinforces or undermines political movements for neoliberal education reform in Mexico.²

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION AND CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY: THEORIES OF POLICY MOBILITY

I begin with the argument that critical perspectives from geography on policy transfer are highly complementary with those of comparative education for understanding why and how neoliberal education policies cross national borders. Steiner-Khamsi notes how despite the broader, 'trans-sectoral' focus of the policy studies field of research, it supports a welcome depth to the approaches of comparative education. This approach can more specifically be identified as the GSAE approach, with its emphasis on situating local or national policy developments within political and economic changes at the global scale (Steiner-Khamsi 2012, 4). She explains how these two fields of research complement each other with:

"...a similar interpretive framework and method of inquiry, that enables them to draw attention to the local meaning, adaptation, and recontextualisation of reforms that had been transferred or imported. They have systematically adopted a lens that lends explanatory power to local policy contexts, and makes it feasible to explore the contextual reasons for why reforms, best practices, or international standards, were adopted. For these authors, reforms from elsewhere are not necessarily borrowed for rational reasons, but for political or economic ones." (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, 4)

² Much of the research and writing of this paper was done while I was living in Mexico City in July and November of 2013. During the latter visit, I represented my teachers' union, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) at an international conference in solidarity with the Mexican teachers' movement, facilitating much of the access to movement activists and journalists which informs my analysis.

Prince (2012) positions critical geographers as sharing a similar analysis to what Steiner-Khamsi would likely describe as the GSAE approach, emphasizing the importance of studying political and economic causalities within their historical and geographical contexts. More concretely, this means situating the study of policy transfer within an understanding of neoliberalism as a globally dominant political-economic ideology that consistently seeks the expansion of markets into public education. In doing so, he supports the broad methodological analysis developed by fellow geographers Harvey (2007, 115-116) and Peck (2011, 387-388).

Critical geography contributes an articulated analysis that is perhaps more explicit than the GSAE literature of how neoliberalism's globally prevalent ideology is highly uneven in its spatial implementation. As will be discussed below, negotiations and conflicts between domestic and elite groups, and especially the opposition of teachers' movements, are important reasons for this disconnect between policy and reality. Recent works in critical geographies of education also emphasize how practices within school systems can have a strong association with political dynamics at the urban scale (Thiem-Hanson, 2009), such as Lipman's study (2011) concerning the use of charter schools to aid the gentrification of South Chicago.³ Here, I primarily consider policy transfer and political contestation at the national-international scale, which contains many similarities with the GSAE work that is rooted in country-level development studies. Mexico's education system is highly centralized, with key decisions made by the Secretary of Public Education in Mexico City. The official teachers' union, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), is tightly controlled by its national executive. During the period examined here from 2008 to 2014, Mexico's teachers were able to mount an opposition movement that spanned the country. However, an awareness of uneven resistance and divergent institutional contexts at the subnational level is critical to understanding why many state governments were compelled to reach compromises with the movement, despite the abstinence of the federal government.

Like Steiner-Khamsi (2012) and Dale (2010), Prince (2012) defines the approach of critical geographers engaging in policy mobilities research against approaches conventionally taken, principally policy convergence as the inevitable result of cultural and social globalization and the up-take

³ Other recent urban-focused examples include Seattle (Lizotte 2013), New Orleans (Huff 2013) and Toronto (Basu 2013). Few similar studies exist for Mexico, however my forthcoming dissertation will study the construction of teachers' resistance to neoliberal policy in Mexico City, among other North American cities.

by governments of ‘best practices’ from abroad. Within education policy studies, this line of argument is most clearly identified with the Common World Educational Culture approach, primarily identified with the work of John Meyer (see Dale 2000, 455). This approach has been criticized by Steiner-Khamsi (2012, 4) as being “naive” for not considering the contingencies of power struggles at various political scales relevant to education policymaking.⁴ While broadly sharing her critique of ‘consensus-based’ policy convergence (Steiner-Khamsi 2000, 158), Prince (2012, 189) positions that analysis as principally the product of mainstream policy studies, arguing:

“But geographers have had a different focus, studying policy transfer in order to think about how they manifest the changing power relations which shape the circumstances in which they occur. This work speaks to the interscalar and cross-national power struggles that produce the policy harmonization and differentiation that together constitute internationalizing policy regimes.”

Peck (2011, 775) makes a similar distinction utilizing categories to distinguish between positivist best practices ‘policy-transfer’ anchored in political science, and a social constructivist ‘policy mobilities’ that is trans-disciplinary and contextual. Finding complementary analyses between critical geographers engaged in research on policy transfer and the GSAE approach within comparative education, I will now discuss the political and economic causalities behind the latest wave of neoliberal education policies in Mexico.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: THE CONTEMPORARY ROLL-OUT OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION POLICY

The package of neoliberal education reforms at the centre of this study were introduced to the Mexican Congress by Enrique Peña Nieto on December 10, 2012 less than two weeks after his presidential inauguration on December 1. In an instance of what Peck has described as ‘fast policy’ (2010, 195), the swiftness by which Mexico’s lower and upper

⁴ Dale (2000, 436) draws a key distinction between the Common World Educational Culture (CWEC) approach and GSAE, with the former emphasizing ‘idealistic’ causality, and the latter using a structural-materialist lens, “For CWEC, the world polity is a reflection of the Western cultural account, based around a particular set of values that penetrate every region of modern life. For GSAE, globalization is a set of political-economic arrangements for the organization of the global economy, driven by the need to maintain the capitalist system rather than by any set of values.”

legislatures passed this legislation on December 21 and became law on February 6, 2013 was remarkable.⁵ Seemingly intent on distinguishing himself from his two predecessors, whose legislative agendas were largely blocked over each of their six-year terms, as well as shaking off considerable political attacks during the election campaign and allegations of massive vote fraud, Peña Nieto moved fast and effectively to build a political consensus with his two principal rival parties. The 'Pact for Mexico', co-signed with the leaders of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) and the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) (in the latter case provoking substantial internal dissension), was unveiled on Peña Nieto's second day in office. The accord comprised a series of major proposed bills, of which primary-secondary education reform was only the first. Others included changes to labour statutes in the constitution that legalized already prevalent precarious employment practices, reforms to the tax code and the denationalization of Mexico's energy sector. The ease by which these major changes passed in Peña Nieto's first year in office, with the endorsement of all three dominant parties (though with the PRD opposing energy liberalization and leaving the Pact for Mexico on this basis) is virtually unprecedented since the fading of the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) seventy year rule over Mexico as a one-party state in the 1990s.⁶ This elite ideological consensus behind the roll-out of neoliberal policy provides much of the basis by which profound changes to Mexico's education system were enacted (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 27-28).

Key contents of the reforms centered around teacher hiring, salaries and job security, many of which were in fact previously established in the 2008 'Alliance for Quality Education', negotiated between the prior president Felipe Calderon, and SNTE president Elba Esther Gordillo.

⁵ Peck defines 'fast policy' as emerging transnational networks of rapid policy exchanges between technocratic experts, typically claiming a pragmatic ambivalence to any political ideology. Their activities and policy conclusions tend to be insulated from direct public influence or oversight and in fact emerge from within defined, usually narrow ideological frameworks (Peck, 2010, 195-196).

⁶ The PRI and its predecessor parties ruled Mexico at the national level, and in nearly all states and municipalities, nearly all of the time, from the end of the armed period of the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s until 2000, when it lost what was arguably the second free election held during this period. The significance of the rapid enactment of significant neoliberal reforms through Peña Nieto's 'Pact for Mexico', is evident when contrasted to the previous three terms of PRI and PAN presidents. Beginning with PRIsta Ernesto Zedillo's election in 1994 (the first free election), emerging social movements and fiercely partisan opposition parties made the passing of sweeping policies difficult, defeating radical changes to public education. Shifts in the internal dynamics of the PAN and the PRD that led both to collaborate with Peña Nieto are beyond the scope of this paper, but the ideological convergence of the three parties and the clear resurgence of the PRI after twelve years out of national office are key factors.

However due to fierce resistance by long-standing opposition within the union, these reforms were wholly or partially unimplemented in several key southern and central states.⁷ By embedding these policies within the Mexican Constitution, with all the legal weight this implied and then implementing them through new legislation in a renewed effort to impose them nationally, Peña Nieto strived to overcome this resistance.

The legislation passed in February 2013 inserts new language under the education clauses of the Mexican Constitution (Article 3), stipulating that teacher hiring will be subject to the passing of standardized exams, and that the continuation of their employment will depend on success at subsequent evaluations over the course of their career. The implementation of these articles was defined by subsequent 'secondary laws' passed in September 2013 (Arriaga, 2013, 13-14). A series of standing proposals from the government were planned to determine teacher employment. The singular focus of these proposed policies lead many education activists to argue that the reforms really have very little to do with so-called education 'quality', and should properly be considered as labour market reforms targeting employees in the public education sector.⁸ New teachers would be hired on the basis of passing a professional exam, a policy advocated as a means of eliminating widespread nepotism in the form of teachers inheriting a position from a retiring parent, or otherwise bidding on an opening in exchange for the outgoing teacher's 'endorsement', a process also reputedly coordinated by corrupt union officers for personal enrichment. The reality was quite different in the southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, where the democratic teachers' movement union won control of union locals in the 1980s.

Here, teacher hiring as well as promotions to administrative and supervisory positions have been handled transparently, with the latter determined through elections by their peers, in a remarkable form of workers' self-management (Cook, 1996, 194-195). Nevertheless, with teacher hiring practices widely criticized by the public as corrupt due largely to sensational media exposés like the film *De Panzazo!* and the experiences of applicants in states controlled by union officials tied to Gordillo, provisions around union control of hiring were eliminated with little resistance. Another proposed change in hiring would remove the mandatory requirement of a minimum one-year university degree in education, reducing the qualification

⁷ Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacan, Morelos and Mexico City.

⁸ In Hernández Navarro's (2013, 16) words: "Their real goal is to change the nature of work for teachers."

for becoming a public school teacher to holding an undergraduate university degree and passing the exam (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 40).⁹ Under the ‘Alliance for Quality Education’ (ACE), salary and job tenure were largely removed from the stipulations of union negotiated collective agreements, with increases determined on a formula weighted 50 percent on the annual standardized exam results of their students (professional development accounts for 30 percent, ‘school leadership’ for 10 percent and seniority 10 percent). However as was mentioned above, teachers’ groups organized outside the official SNTE union defeated the implementation of the ACE in states across central-southern Mexico (Bocking, 2012, 14). Laws under consideration would revive this effort of replacing negotiated salary increases with merit pay driven by student and teacher testing.

ACE also included the creation the National Institute for Education Evaluation (INEE) as a branch of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) to oversee teacher and student exams. The constitutional amendment makes the INEE autonomous office, directly overseen by the federal executive, ostensibly to provide it with both greater impartiality and to insulate it from the political contestation of the teachers’ union within the SEP. The constitutional change strengthens existing ACE policies, with failure on a test stipulating mandatory professional development training at the teachers’ expense at one of many newly opened privately-run training schools, with subsequent failure leading to dismissal (Arriaga, 2013, 13-14; Bacon, 2013).

An additional proposal is the trial roll-out of an extended school day from six to eight hours with some, but not proportional increased compensation for teachers. According to investigative journalist Hernandez Navarro (2013), Peña Nieto preempted teacher opposition to this demand by “demagogically” portraying resistant teachers as unwilling to work hard to educate children. Finally, a touchstone of the proposed reforms emerging from the constitutional amendment is enhanced ‘school autonomy’. Promoted as a measure to increase parental participation in their children’s education, coupled with teacher exams, it would empower principals to directly hire and fire teachers, significantly weakening collective agreement provisions regarding employee

⁹ Even the latter could be negotiated, provided one held sufficiently strong reference letters from administrators, according to some anti-reform activists in the state of Morelos who had fought the original pre-Constitutional version of this hiring practice initiated in many states as part of the ‘Alliance for Quality Education’. In effect, coupled with a defacto deskilling, one form of patronage was replaced with another, favouring school authorities (Bocking, 2012, 14).

discipline. While the overwhelming focus of the reforms is on changing the employment conditions of teachers, the ‘school autonomy’ measures are also important because of its encouragement of individual schools to set student fees (previously widespread but legislated at the state level, despite violating the spirit of constitutionally guaranteed free access to primary and secondary education). Education critics fear the measure will encourage schools to enter into increased corporate partnerships to make up for chronic underfunding. Measures also provide for the increased provision of school-based and mobile internet-ready computer labs, with significant private funding.

Two weeks after the signing of the education reforms into the constitution, Mexican authorities arrested the president of the SNTE since 1989, Elba Esther Gordillo, and charged her with embezzling hundreds of millions of pesos in union funds (Tuckman, 2013). The democratic teachers’ movement joined the broad Mexican public in celebrating the fall of a power broker legendary for her personal corruption. The arrest of arguably the most powerful woman in Mexican politics was strategic both for the roll-out of the education reforms, and for setting the terms of Peña Nieto’s presidency:

“The unpopularity of Elba Esther Gordillo in public opinion is so great, that any action to change the system of teaching in the country that included the defeat of the lifetime leader of the SNTE, easily won broad popular support.... This announcement [of her arrest] and the intense publicity campaign that accompanied it, led to employer’s associations, academics and parts of the population giving their support to the new government.” (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 27)

I now turn to the political and economic implications of these policies, drawing attention to the intersections of external policy advocacy, cross border ideological movement and domestic institutional struggle.

WORLD BANK AND THE OECD: THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS ON EDUCATION POLICY FORMATION

Aside from the ‘best practices policy learning’ models proposed by advocates of CWEC, and critiqued by researchers using the GSAE approach as lacking a nuanced contextual analysis of political and economic power relations, Verger (2009) proposes several key ‘mechanisms’ through which global institutions influence national education

policy: imposition, IMF attaches conditionalities related to the implementation of specific economic policies in return for loans; the dissemination of policy through recourse to technical expertise and the shaping of data, as in the case of the extensive research and policy papers produced by the WB and the OECD; and standardization, whereby states agree to adhere to an international norm such as the administering of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam (Verger, 2009, 382). Similarly, Carnoy (1999) associates these mechanisms with the roll-out of competition and finance-driven reforms, under varying degrees of compulsion by the World Bank and the IMF, and strongly held beliefs within the national state that such measures are critical for ensuring international competitiveness in the context of capitalist globalization. While advocates of the CWEC approach would agree with the significance of the latter two mechanisms, researchers applying a GSAE analysis argue that CWEC ignores the contextual political conflict in which these exchanges occur, which are important to understanding their role in the context of neoliberal education reform in Mexico.

The role of the IMF and its capacity for influencing state policy through loan conditionalities has declined in Mexico in the decades since the massive bailout following the Peso Crisis of 1994 (Sigmond, 2010). The WB and the OECD have a major presence in Mexico and a significant impact on the formation of national education policy. However, in my view, the mechanisms by which the WB and the OECD influence Mexican education through advocating policy reforms are best described as collaboration through dissemination and standardization, with the leading role played by Mexican authorities, rather than through involuntary imposition.

Klees describes the World Bank as “the major player in global education policy” and “at the forefront of the shift to neoliberal thinking” (Klees, 2008, 312). Mexico is the WB’s fourth largest ‘portfolio’, with loans reaching \$6.4 billion in 2010 and dropping to \$2.8 billion in 2011 (World Bank 2013).¹⁰ Of twenty-two active projects in 2010, five related to primary, secondary or tertiary sector education, including a \$1.5 billion supplement to the Mexican government’s Oportunidades program, which provides small cash transfers to impoverished families tied to completing tasks such as maintaining school attendance. \$220 million was also budgeted in a ‘School-Based Management’ project

¹⁰ Mexico’s GDP shrank by 6 percent in 2009, far worse than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean, which shrank by 1.5 percent, due to Mexico’s far greater economic reliance on the struggling US market for exports and as a source of remittances (World Bank, 2013).

intended to assist the roll-out of ACE, though at the submission of the 2010 annual report, no funds had been disbursed (World Bank, 2010). Certainly the World Bank's capacity to provide significant funding for projects it supports has an influence on the priorities of a national education system with pressing needs in numerous areas. In addition to its significant budget, the World Bank (like the OECD), can also clothe its recommendations in a veneer of objectivity, making highly political assertions difficult to contest:

“The various statistical tables, diagrams, spreadsheets, charts and other abstracting and universalizing technologies which enable comparisons and translations to be made with ease bring these objects, and the places that contain them, into a virtual space of comparison where policy learning, exchange and transfer can take place. The assembly of these technical systems across geographical space enables particular objects that draw on and refer to them... to travel relatively unproblematically from place to place.” (Prince 2012: 193)

Mexico's constitutional reforms incorporating teacher evaluation and related legislation under deliberation do appear to strongly resemble those advocated by the WB in its Making Schools Work report, which is also primarily focused on changing teachers' employment conditions, rather than advocating for distinct pedagogical approaches or increased funding for schools.

As in the Bank's other recent major education policy document, Learning for All (2011), the language centers around increasing 'accountability,' 'quality' and 'effectiveness'. The WB's concept of 'school-based management' (SBM), mirrors the 'school autonomy' policies found in ACE and the proposals for the realization of Peña Nieto's constitutional amendments, giving principals the right to grant salary raises, discipline and fire teachers based on their performance on exams or that of their students. While not directly advocating school fees and confronting the basic principles of 'Education for All', like Mexican advocates of school autonomy, the Bank suggests additional benefits from SBM can be derived from more "resources from parents (whether in cash or in-kind)" and school committees with parental involvement engaged in fundraising (Burns, 2011, 88-90). Writing in 1999, Carnoy's critique of 'school autonomy' remains prescient. In terms of decentralizing decision-making, he argues that in practice, public school teachers in most countries (including Mexico) already enjoy substantial autonomy

in how they approach curriculum in their classrooms. Carnoy notes that 'autonomy' policies have been opposed on the grounds that they have tended to consist of downloading some funding responsibility from federal or state authorities to the municipal level, which usually has a more limited capacity for raising revenue, or to the parents of students themselves, as the WB itself implies (Carnoy, 1999, 52-56). Peck describes this downloading of public services like education since the 1990s as a widespread scalar strategy associated with neoliberalism intended to shift risks and responsibilities where possible to local and extra-state authorities which are increasingly encouraged to compete for globally mobile private investment (Peck, 2002, 391-394).

As described by Carnoy (1999) and Klees (2008), while deploying substantial language around improving student learning and despite various ancillary programs, the focus of the WB remains the limitation of state expenditures on public education, principally through reduced labour costs of teachers and privatization. *Making Schools Work* presents several case studies of experiments in African and South Asian countries of the impact on student achievement of replacing permanent teachers with contract employees paid a fraction of the standard salary, and sometimes without professional qualifications (Burns, 2011, 147-156). However, despite the Bank's undeniably strong presence in Mexico, it is difficult to impute the extent to which the WB directly influences policy of the Mexican government, beyond the implementation of specific projects such as the 'School-Based Management' program mentioned above.

However a complex and significant relationship can be assembled between the government of Enrique Peña Nieto and the OECD, especially in the persona of its secretary-general, José Ángel Gurría, who has deep connections to the president's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). After joining the party at 18, as a "fanatic of the free market" according to Hernández Navarro (2013, 99), in the 1980s he sided with the ascendant neoliberal technocrats over the populist corporatist faction who had built the PRI from its origins in the 1920s. Gurría was Mexico's chief negotiator for NAFTA and later served as minister of foreign affairs and secretary of finance in the Zedillo government (1994-2000). A rising star within the PRI, he was considered a potential presidential candidate, prior to 12 years of PAN rule (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 99-101). First appointed to lead the OECD in 2006 with an endorsement by outgoing Mexican president Vicente Fox, Gurría maintained nominal relations with the government of Felipe Calderon of PAN. However he has only strengthened his ties to Peña Nieto from when the latter served as governor of

Mexico State prior to winning the presidency, playing an active role in the president-elect's preparation of policy up to his assumption of office, and afterwards frequently voicing his support publicly for initiatives like the Pact for Mexico and the education reforms (Brito, 2013).

In a CNN Español article titled "OECD reading the script to Peña Nieto", journalists reported on Gurría's initiative to speak out in September 2012 soon after the confirmation of Peña Nieto's victory on the urgent need for structural reforms. The president welcomed the comments, replying "I propose that the OECD become a strategic ally for the design of the policies that Mexico needs, and what greater contribution than to have a friend at the head of this organization." (Jiménez, 2012) For his part, Gurría responded graciously and with urgency that the OECD, "awaits its orders to work with Mexico, its institutions...day by day to make the Pact [for Mexico] a reality." (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 101). He adds in the forward to *Getting it Right: Strategic Reforms for Mexico*, a document released in September 2012 and explicitly intended to help shape the agenda of Peña Nieto's transition team prior to entering office in December, that "the new Mexican government should consider the OECD an extension of its own capacities." (OECD, 2013a, 4). During his inaugural visit with European heads of state in October 2012, the president-elect made time to include a personal visit to the OECD headquarters in Paris (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 114). One month earlier, Peña Nieto signed a "declaration of intentions" with the OECD to begin the privatization of the publicly owned oil company PEMEX. The action was seen as evidence of the OECD's influence, given that this was one of the key recommendations of *Getting it Right* (Villamil, 2012).¹¹

The education section of this document echoes the WB in encouraging the Mexican government's ongoing drive to increase use of standardized student and teacher evaluations as the surest means to improve education 'quality'. It also diagnoses a deficit of 'school autonomy', defined as the ability of principals to directly hire, set salaries and fire school staff (OECD, 2013a, 129-130). The consistency of the neoliberal orthodoxy in the OECD's recommendations and its fealty to 'finance driven reforms' as defined by Carnoy (1999, 42), is evident by their consistent dismissal of their own extensive survey data, which would reasonably suggest that 'teacher quality' in Mexico would be best improved by raising salaries and providing paid preparation time, rather than increasing workplace

¹¹ However it should also be noted that privatization of PEMEX has been a long standing and key demand of Mexican business groups, foreign investors and pro-free trade transnational agencies like the OECD as well as the World Trade Organization, IMF and WB.

discipline. The report cites a Secretary of Education survey of school principals indicating frequent lateness among staff, due to teachers working at different schools in the morning and afternoon. Improvements in teacher scheduling are not suggested, nor are low salaries acknowledged as the reason why many primary and secondary teachers seek an additional shift or ‘plaza’ (OECD, 2013a, 129, 132).

According to the OECD’s comprehensive survey of the education systems of member nations, *Education at a Glance 2013*, annual classroom instructional hours in 2011 for Mexican secondary teachers were 1050 hours (the OECD average is 709), the third highest in the OECD after Argentina, Chile and the US (OECD, 2013b, 396). Another strong indicator provided by this survey of the likely widespread high levels of stress experienced by Mexican teachers is that 100 percent of recognized work time for primary teachers and 90 percent for secondary teachers is spent on classroom instruction, by far the highest average in the OECD (OECD, 2013b, 399).¹² This means virtually no recognized, scheduled and compensated time is provided for Mexican teachers to mark, prepare lesson plans or attend meetings with other school staff or parents. All of the tasks described above are pushed into time unrecognized by education authorities (e.g. evenings and weekends), usually performed away from the worksite. However, rather than disbursing the additional funds required to free up additional teacher time enabling them to improve the ‘quality’ of education, the Mexican government, WB and OECD, in conjunction with business advocacy organizations, pursue a strategy of increasing the ‘quantity’ of teacher work, disciplined by increased employment precariousness.

The specific political conjuncture of the return of the PRI to national power and the leadership of one of its own at the head of the OECD has led this transnational agency to obtain significant influence over policy formation within Mexico. The context parallels the policy mobilities scenario outlined by Koenig-Archibugi (2010) and Verger (2009) in which outside experts are enlisted to validate the contested policies of factions of the state. Navarro clearly makes the connection to the close relationship between the Mexican government and the OECD:

“[Mexican] governments have systematically adopted the great majority of their recommendations. At key moments, this has supported

¹² In Canada by comparison, elementary and secondary school teachers respectively spend 65 and 60 percent of their recognized work time directly instructing students (OECD, 2013b, 399).

government policies that did not hold sufficient internal consensus, to be legitimized when presented as the advisories of the supranational organization. In this manner internal negotiating positions are strengthened.” (Hernández Navarro 108-109)

However if this has been the case at least since the affiliation of Mexico to the OECD in 1994 and participation in PISA since 2000, how has the close relationship between Peña Nieto’s government and Gurría manifested itself? Navarro explains the new closeness of this relationship:

“But if the influence of the organization [OECD] on defining education policies has been so significant for many years, what’s new about it now being decisive at the moment of setting these new education norms? The difference between the previous reforms to teaching and the recent changes to the Constitution is that these elevate to a higher level the OECD’s proposals, constitutionalizing them....preventing a regression on these reforms.” (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 103)

If it is evident that the WB and especially the OECD have provided critical support in laying the groundwork for the Mexican government’s contemporary neoliberal education reforms, another key form of cross border ideological movement has been the role of Mexican-based business lobby groups, which strongly resemble similar organizations in the US. While the WB and OECD supply policy rationales and authoritative research, the latter groups strive to open up political space for reforms within the broader Mexican public. By studying these organizations, especially the activities of Mexicanos Primero (Mexicans First), a clearer picture of the balance of elite structural-institutional pressures within Mexico in favour of neoliberal reforms becomes evident. Of course, this broader political-economic context remains a contested space, particularly in light of the democratic teachers’ movement in confronting and potentially transforming these policies.

MEXICANOS PRIMERO AND DOMESTIC STRUCTURAL-INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS BEHIND EDUCATION REFORM

Like the World Bank and the OECD, since its founding in 2005 Mexicanos Primero, has worked extensively to popularize the notion that “Only quality education will change Mexico” (Mexicanos, 2013) within policymaking circles and civil society at large. In doing so, it has represented the consortium of corporate interests which comprise its

directorship and funding sources, emerging as perhaps the most important Mexican business lobby group on education. Its founder, Claudio X. González Guajardo was previously the president of Fundación Televisa, the corporate social responsibility arm of the Televisa conglomerate, Mexico's massive private TV and radio monopoly. He is also the honorary president of the Unión de Empresarios para la Tecnología en la Educación (Union of Businesspeople for Technology in Education, UNETE), a corporate lobby group for obtaining technology contracts in Mexican public schools. UNETE funders include Intel, Microsoft, Toshiba and Ford (a major private funder of Mexican schools). Guajardo's father is multi-billionaire Claudio X. González Laporte, president of Kimberly Clark Mexico, chair of the Mexican Businessmen's Association, and one of the most powerful business leaders in Mexico (Bacon, 2013b; Hernández Navarro, 2013b; Economist, 2008).

Mexicanos Primero rose to significant power with the victory of Peña Nieto, however the group first emerged to prominence with the release of their film, *De Panzazo!* in 2011. The documentary has been frequently described by critics and supporters alike as a Mexican version of the earlier released and US-focused *Waiting for Superman*. In both films, education reform advocates decry the failings of their respective national education systems, especially for the most marginalized students, present the power of teacher unions as a principal cause through its alleged role in protecting bad teachers and opposing reforms, and position neoliberal policies as the solution (Zebadúa, 2012; Bacon, 2013b). How can we account for the strong parallels between messaging of Mexicanos Primero and similar groups in the US behind *Waiting for Superman*, like Students First, founded after the Mexican organization in 2010 by Michelle Rhee? David Bacon (2013) quotes the founder and former rector of the Autonomous University of Mexico City, Manuel Pérez Rocha, on the parallels between corporate-led strategies in the US and Mexico: "The Mexican right always copies the United State's right... The politics of merit pay and the correlation with standardized exam results is identical between the two countries. The right wants to convert education into a commodity and students into merchandise – 'Let's fill their heads with information and put them to work.'" He notes there are important differences because the national union in Mexico [the SNTE of now deposed Elba Esther Gordillo] is an entrenched part of the power structure.

In spring 2013, New York State authorities backed the substance of the concessions demanded by New York Mayor Bloomberg (a key funder and proponent of Students First) and imposed a new teacher evaluation system in response to a deadlock in negotiations between

the United Federation of Teachers and the city administration. The system closely resembles policies outlined in Mexico's constitutional amendments and specified in the earlier ACE policies, evaluations are decided 20-25 percent from the results of standardized student exams, 15-20 percent through 'in school mechanisms' and the remainder through principal observation. After two consecutive annual 'ineffective' ratings, the teacher is fired (Jaffe, 2013). In the absence of evidence of direct exchanges of policies between organizations like Students First and Mexicanos Primero, following the Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE) methodology, one can conclude that Mexico and the US are both subject to a combination of influences from similar waves of policy recommendations from transnational organizations like the OECD and WB, and structural-institutional pressures from domestic business elites embedded within global capitalism (Dale, 2000).

De Panzazo! received a wide release in central Mexico through the Cinepolis movie theatre chain, whose CEO Alejandro Ramírez Magaña, is also the vice-president of Mexicanos Primero (Mexicanos, 2013), as well as coverage on Televisa in the months leading up to the 2012 national elections. The film's fervently anti-union, pro-privatization message received at least nominal support from the WB, which hosted a special screening of the documentary with a panel discussion at its Mexico City offices.¹³ A promotion for the event on the WB's website describes the film:

"The documentary features interviews with key actors in the education system, hard data, and poignant testimonials from students, parents and teachers. One can see similarities to the U.S. documentary, *Waiting for Superman*, which generated widespread debate for its biting criticism of the deficiencies of US public schools and its suggestion that teachers' unions bear a significant responsibility for them.... We hope that ¡De Panzazo! will spark the same type of debates as its U.S. counterpart, and that it continues to draw attention to a much-needed educational reform in Mexico." (World Bank 2012)

Mexicanos Primero draws similar support from the OECD. According to Navarro, Gurría delivered a video address to the organization at its 2011 general meeting soon after the release of *De Panzazo!*, praising its "exemplar work" (Hernández Navarro, 2013, 111).

¹³ An event taken seriously by the WB, the panel featured its lead education economist, Harry Patrinos and its sector manager on education, Robin Horn (World Bank, 2012).

Beyond these instances and the closely aligned policies presented above, it is difficult to know the extent to which the OECD and the WB cooperate with each other and with Mexicanos Primero in coordinating a strategy for the roll-out of neoliberal education policy in Mexico. Their relationships with each other are clearly more substantial than that of a mutual recognition of shared interests, but what is unquestionable is the strong influence of the three in the formation of policy under Peña Nieto. This is particularly evident in the case of Mexicanos Primero. As the most important representative of Mexican capitalism advocating for the privatization of education, its status at the forefront of shaping the roll-out of neoliberal education policy in cooperation with the Mexican state underlines the significance of domestic structural-institutional factors relative to the capacities of transnational institutions for determining the roll-out of policy. This is the case considering how so much of the OECD's apparent influence in Mexico as a transnational organization is actually contingent on 'domestic' political connections in the persona of Gurría, who happens to be its secretary general, with the present regime of Peña Nieto. Contrary to Peck's early description of the emergence of neoliberalism in the developing world as a result of "externally impos[ed] unbending rule regimes enforced by global institutions and policed by local functionaries" (Peck, 2002, 381), at least in the case of a contemporary mid-sized 'middle-income' state like Mexico, national capitalist classes appear to possess a substantial degree of agency in implementing neoliberal reforms in collaboration with the state. Peck himself presents a more nuanced analysis along these lines, when he and Brenner argue that:

"...it is problematic to assume that neoliberalization processes normally or necessarily move 'downwards' along a global-to-national vector....this superordinate gaze fails to take account of the strategic role of national, regional and local state apparatuses as active progenitors of neoliberalizing institutional reforms and policy prototypes, and as arenas in which market oriented regulatory experiments are initiated, consolidated and even extended." (Brenner, 2010, 195-196).

The Mexican state would surely constitute such an actor leading the implementation of neoliberal policy, without whose commitment, associated with its strong connections to Mexican capital, much of the recommendations of the WB and the OECD would be ignored (Harvey, 2007, 117).

Soon after the confirmation of Peña Nieto's electoral victory, on September 12, 2012 Mexicanos Primero publicly released the following

proposals: removal of principals from union membership and reclassification as management, the tying of teacher employment to the results of mandatory standardized evaluations, increasing school autonomy (in the sense defined by the OECD and the WB above) and removing funding for teachers on union time release (Hernández Navarro, 2013b). Shortly afterwards, Peña Nieto appointed Claudio X. González Guajardo to lead his education transition team, and lending strong support to the second and third of Mexicanos' recommendations, Gurría presented *Getting it Right*, "prepared by the OECD in the context of the agreement for a strategic alliance between Mexico and the OECD for the 2012-2018 administration." (OECD, 2013a, 5). During the following three months, Peña Nieto's transition team conducted intensive closed door negotiations with the leadership of the two opposition parties to create a top-level consensus over a significant range of proposed policies prior to any legislative debate (Bacon, 2013b). This was the political context in which the Pact for Mexico gestated before release in the form of the proposed constitutional changes at the start of the new president's term.

RESISTANCE TO NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION POLICY: THE DEMOCRATIC TEACHERS' MOVEMENT

There are many more significant actors beyond the state and business associations like Mexicanos Primero which shape the political and economic context in which neoliberal education reforms are rolled out. However the democratic teachers' movement, the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE), has emerged as the most important organization to contest these policies, frequently resulting in their modification or annulment. Emerging in a nationwide wave of strikes and organizing in 1979-82, the CNTE has since served as a strong pole of resistance within Mexico's largest union, the 1.4 million SNTE which following its formation in 1943, has been controlled by authoritarian leaders loyal to the national government and affiliated with the governing PRI. Though the CNTE's strength has fluctuated, it is generally considered to be the dominant force within the union in state-level locals representing roughly a third of the total membership. Much of its power is concentrated in the south, with its bedrock of support in Michoacán, Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca, Mexico's poorest states with strong traditions of organizing and protest, as well as the elementary teachers' local in Mexico City. Here, the CNTE has generally led the union locals, and provided historically strong opposition to neoliberal reforms from the Secretary of Education's national and state offices. The

movement has also risen and fallen in many other central and northern states during this time (Cook, 1996; Foweraker, 1993).

Coinciding with the power vacuum following former union president Gordillo's ouster, the CNTE experienced a resurgence of energy and support among teachers over 2013 as it seized the initiative channeling widespread rank and file teacher frustration following the constitutional reforms. In the months following approval of the constitutional reforms it led short strikes first in Guerrero, followed by Michoacán, Chiapas and Mexico City.¹⁴ New outreach by the CNTE through regional meetings and forums over the summer of 2013 spread the geographical reach of the democratic teachers into northern and eastern states including Zacatecas, Chihuahua, Jalisco, San Luis Potosi and Veracruz, which previously lacked a significant presence. The broader upsurge also strengthened the movement in states where it was previously divided between dissident factions, as in Puebla and Morelos. A clear sign of the success of this movement was the Ministry of the Interior and Secretary of Education's recognition of the CNTE as a negotiating party, in addition to the official union leadership of the SNTE.

The start of the 2013-14 school year in August witnessed the eruption of full strikes by CNTE members in its strongholds, as well as new bases of support in Veracruz and Campeche. Regular demonstrations, occupations of government buildings and toll roads, and one day work stoppages in many more, led to a historic height of major mobilizations by teachers in all of Mexico's thirty-two states and the Federal District of Mexico City. While recognizing and meeting with national CNTE negotiating teams, the Interior Ministry (Gobernación) which took the lead from bargaining from the education secretary, appears to have adopted a scalar strategy according to many teacher and media observers of not yielding on the most contentious issues. These include expansion of student and teacher testing to define teacher effectiveness, the circumvention of union 'just cause provisions' to give principals discretionary power to fire teachers on the basis of these exams, and the devolution of significant school financing to local parent councils. The strongest dissident teacher sections would then be compelled to seek negotiations at the state level and thereby isolate and leave vulnerable to repression weaker regions of the movement when the former reach agreements and demobilize. Indeed, in mid-September 2013, Peña Nieto again mobilized the 'Pact for Mexico,' easily passing the

¹⁴ Information in the following section emerged principally from the author's time in Mexico City in July and November 2013 observing teacher marches, rallies and meetings, and through unstructured conversations with participating teachers, movement allies and journalists.

'leyes secundarias' (secondary laws).¹⁵ Meanwhile, negotiations continued between the most consolidated CNTE sections in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán, Campeche, Veracruz, Guerrero and their state governments, amid protests and strikes across most of Mexico and a joint encampment of the national movement in Mexico City. Tentative agreements in the first four were reached by the end of the year, with these teachers returning to the classroom and a smaller group of union activists rotating through the main protest camp in support of unresolved states (Proceso, 2013).

Is the Mexican government's apparent approach of containing opposition to education reforms in a handful of states in order to dampen a national movement, while refusing to compromise on its core policies successful? As I write in late 2014, it is uncertain. Journalists and movement participants I discussed this with in November 2013 as protests were demobilizing, believed that in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Michoacán, along with victories on local issues including hiring more teachers, settlements included a de facto agreement that these key aspects of the secondary laws would not be imposed.¹⁶ However the Interior Ministry and Peña Nieto insist that no circumventions will be tolerated from the core elements of the constitutional changes and their enacting laws, filing complaints in April 2014 with the Mexican Supreme Court that the state governments of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán and Sonora had reached agreements with their teachers that were contrary to federal legislation (Aristegui Noticias, 2014a).

In place of the standardized exams for teachers and students stipulated by ACE and the constitutional reforms in Oaxaca, an alternative union-designed program is being implemented, the 'Program for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca (PTEO)'. In place of a reliance on multiple choice tests, the PTEO conducts student and teacher evaluation primarily through written journals, work portfolios and collective reflection. A comprehensive response to many of the deficits in education structures which neoliberal reforms like 'school autonomy' claim to remedy, the PTEO strives to increase

¹⁵ This time, with a large bloc of PRD legislators dissenting, insufficient in the face of unanimous PRI and PAN support.

¹⁶ Interview with Chiapas journalist, November 22, 2013, Mexico City; Interview with Oaxaca journalist, November 22, 2013, Mexico City; Interview with Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education activist 1, November 22, 2013, Mexico City; Interview with Michoacan teacher, November 24, 2013, Mexico City; Interview with Veracruz teacher 1, November 24, 2013, Mexico City; Interview with Veracruz teacher 2, November 24, 2013, Mexico City. One long time education activist disagreed and argued that agreements reached by these CNTE locals left the movement vulnerable because the key text of the secondary laws were included, and could later be put into effect by these state governments (Interview with Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education activist 2, November 22, 2013). At the time of writing, the full text of these agreements were not obtainable by the author.

parent connections with schools by instituting new recognized and funded committees, which in deliberations with local teachers, staff and older students can modify existing programs and timetables, such as including more indigenous language instruction. PTEO pilot projects were initiated in 280 schools across Oaxaca in May and June 2012 (Bacon, 2013). These successes in Oaxaca and their clear departure from the national plan for education reform are a legacy of years of militancy on the part of the state's teachers and their effectiveness in reaching accords with broader civil society. With their focus on democratizing public education through enriched pedagogy which recognizes teacher professional capacities and strengthened community ties through meaningful parent participation (in contrast to more symbolic forms of consultation advocated under School Based Management), the PTEO is a significant local reform contradicting neoliberal policies that are globally dominant.¹⁷ In the face of pressure from the Mexican federal government, Oaxacan governor Gabino Cué insisted that these measures, "do not contravene in any way the provisions of Articles 3 and 73 of the Constitution or the secondary laws" (Aristegui Noticias 2014b), despite the absence of standardized teacher evaluation. Oaxacan teachers continued to mobilize as the 2014-2015 school year began to ensure Cué did not succumb to this pressure. Meanwhile, the CNTE succeeded in reopening a national level negotiating table with the Interior Ministry, which could reduce pressure from the federal government against state-level agreements that circumvent Peña Nieto's reforms (Solano, 2014).¹⁸

During previous national upsurges in 1979-1982, 1989-1990 (Foweraker, 1993; Cook, 1996) and in 2008 in response to the ACE, state-level agreements were reached which combined with

¹⁷ Parental support for striking teachers during the weeks in which their children were out of school was also bolstered in several states including Chiapas and Veracruz, which made an apparent strategic error by moving quickly following passage of the secondary laws in September to publicize the exact expenses for which parent councils would now be responsible at their children's schools. The non-salary expenses included school routine maintenance, utilities and classroom supplies. Interview with Trinational Coalition in Defense of Public Education activist 1, November 22, 2013, Mexico City.

¹⁸ In the course of revising this article, Mexican teachers rallied in support of forty-three rural student-teachers in Guerrero, who disappeared in September 2014 following protests against discriminatory hiring practices. News reports suggest that many of these students were murdered by police complicit with one of the state's powerful drug cartels. In the following weeks, the CNTE, university students and families of the disappeared occupied city halls across Guerrero, calling for the return of the students and the resignation of the governor. These disappearances and acts of violence against teachers in Guerrero, Michoacán and northern border states, point to the serious threat posed to civil society by narco power and complicit governments in large regions of Mexico (Morelos 2014).

government and official union repression, led to the containment of the movement when its strongest contingents demobilized. This time with the departure of Gordillo, the balance of power within the SNTE is much more favourable to the CNTE, lending credibility to declarations that it will challenge control of the union at the national level (Solano, 2013). However, as with former president Carlos Salinas with whom Peña Nieto is sometimes compared, Peña Nieto has otherwise enjoyed significant political momentum.¹⁹

In the terms of constructing a contextual political-economic analysis, a significant factor in the unevenness of the Mexican state's success in implementing neoliberal education reforms across regions and states are the differences in the balances of class forces, with the strength of the democratic teachers' movement serving as a key variable. These findings support the claims of Harvey (2007) and others (Herod, 1997; 2001) that aside from the intentions of the state, capitalist actors and transnational organizations, the presence or absence of concerted struggle from labour and other social movements is crucial for determining the degree to which neoliberal policies are implemented. This assertion is supported by Cook (1996) and Foweraker (1993) when considered in historical perspective though the 1970s-1990s.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the relationships of transnational actors, the WB and the OECD, alongside Mexicanos Primero, a representative of domestic capital, in working with the Mexican state to implement neoliberal education policy. I have also emphasized the role of the democratic teachers' movement as a key actor resisting this agenda. By seeking to understand the activities and relationships between these organizations and key individuals within them, I have mapped the lines of responsibility for contemporary education reforms and constructed the relevant political-economic context. My research supports and reinforces the conclusions reached by others adopting the Globally Structured Agenda for Education analytical framework, as well as other critical social scientists. While possessing significant power through access to resources and expertise, much of the WB's and OECD's considerable influence on Mexico's education system is contingent upon the political interests of

¹⁹ Peña Nieto, Mexico's business class and foreign investors overcame significant resistance to win a tremendous victory in partially denationalizing the oil and energy sectors in December 2013, which the prior two PAN administrations were unsuccessful in achieving.

the Mexican state, which themselves are shaped significantly by domestic structural-institutional pressures defined by a powerful capitalist class organized to exert its influence on policy making through groups like Mexicanos Primero. Nevertheless, the success of these groups in implementing their agenda faces an important challenge from the democratic teachers' movement, which continues to challenge the imposition of neoliberal imperatives.

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Free-Marketization of Academia through Authoritarianism: The Bologna Process in Turkey

Simten Coşar¹ and Hakan Ergül²

ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the neoliberalization of higher education in Turkey. Our analysis is based on the historico-political dynamics of the state-academy-free market nexus in post-1980s Turkey. The paper relies on two layers of analysis. First, we focus on the regulatory mechanisms that have eased the neoliberalization of higher education. We analyze the legal regulations, and mainly the Law on Higher Education and related amendments that have been carried out to restructure the higher education system. The second layer of our analysis concerns academia itself and how the neoliberalization process has been perceived, internalized or opposed from within academia via ethnographic data gathering techniques (e.g. participant observations, in-depth interviews and field notes). Here, we focus on those academics who have been actively involved in the implementation of the Bologna Process in the universities of Turkey. Relying on field data, we argue that the Bologna Process is the most recent example of neoliberalizing education in Turkey that has included authoritarianism as an important asset and that has further fragmented academic work through both the internalization of neoliberal thought and alienation.

KEYWORDS: Turkey, Universities, Academia, Neoliberalization, Bologna Process

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims at a critical analysis of the neoliberal reorganization of higher education in Turkey. It focuses on governmental practices and legal instruments that reorganize higher education, while at the same time bringing in field data related to the unfolding of the neoliberalization process from the accounts of the academics themselves. Our analysis is built on the historico-political dynamics of the state-academy-free market nexus in post-1980s Turkey. The period is especially important for understanding the present era since the institutional makeup and political frame for today's educational policies were introduced in the 1980s.

Post-1980s Turkey is characterized by the mark of the 1980 *coup d'état* and the following three-year long military regime (1980-1983), which is known to be the most violent of the three *coup d'états* in the country's political history. The previous two took place in 1960 and 1971. The neoliberalization process was initiated almost simultaneously with the most recent *coup d'état*. The January 24, 1980 stabilization package is exemplary (seven months before the *coup* occurred) because it symbolized the start of Turkey's integration with the neoliberal world economic order.³ The first among the economic packages that would unfold in the course of Turkey's neoliberalization, the package hinted at the priorities of the new regime: stability and consensus in politics – that is to say, no structural opposition. It endorsed export-oriented policies, as opposed to the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model of the previous two decades, and promoted foreign investment, in tandem with the emphasis on privatizing state-owned enterprises. Over the course of the 1980s, these three priorities coalesced and, at times, fluctuated as governments' searched for popular support. 2001, however, was a turning point as the economic crisis cemented neoliberal orthodoxy. While serving as vice-president for the World Bank (WB), Kemal Derviş was unilaterally appointed to cabinet in order to implement policies that would ease the recession. Derviş's economic program was retained by the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), which came to power 2002.⁴

³ January 24 Decisions symbolize a turning point in Turkey integration into the capitalist world system. The Decisions were supported by the IMF and World Bank. In the aftermath of the Decisions Turkey signed a three-year long standby agreement with the IMF.

⁴ We refer to neoliberalism as the reordering of the socio-political sphere in accordance with the prerequisites of the post-Fordist accumulation regime that is characterized by the preference for transnational commercial activity over production, and private investment at the expense of public investment (Harvey, 2005; 2003). In this sense, neoliberalism is also an ideological project intent on justifying this reordering of civil society.

There are two contesting views as to the last decade of Turkey under the AKP's rule. The first is based on the assumption that the AKP's terms in office signify a new era in the political history of the country due to the party's Islamist origins and policy preferences. The second is based on the assumption that the AKP years in Turkey signify the closing of a period marked by the consolidation and crisis phase of neoliberalism. Our approach is informed by the latter argument (Coşar&Yücesan-Özdemir, 2012).

The article is built on two layers of analysis. First, we focus on the regulatory mechanisms that have facilitated the neoliberalization of higher education. We analyze mainly the Law on Higher Education (LHE) and related amendments that have been devised to restructure the higher education system. The second layer concerns how academia has been involved in and affected by neoliberal transformations in the universities. In our view, the Bologna Process (BP) is the most recent policy example of the state's quest to implement neoliberal reforms. In order to ascertain academics' reception of, positioning toward and involvement in the BP, we draw on multi-sited ethnographic research, including participant observation in everyday settings of the universities, interviews and field notes. It is our contention that academics have by and large been systematically excluded from policymaking decisions over the last three decades. In this article, we mainly focus on the data we derive from the semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews serve to explore the views and the first hand experiences of the academics responsible for the implementation of the BP action plans endorsed by their universities. Here, our aim is not only to enrich our analysis with emic perspective regarding the meaning the academics make of their own experiences related to the BP, but also to give them voice as they have been systematically excluded from policy making processes during the last three decades. In this we join Couldry (2014, 114) who reminds that "[t]here is no short-cut to understanding neoliberalism's consequences for the people's daily conditions of voice without listening to the stories people tell us about their lives."

Our field research covers fifteen public and foundation/private universities, which were selected as a result of their historical, social, academic and regional significance in Turkey.⁵ Our discussion in the second half of

⁵ According to the Council of Higher Education "[t]here are two types of universities in Turkey, namely State and Non-profit Foundation Universities" (Higher Education System in Turkey <http://www.yok.gov.tr/documents/10348274/10733291/TR'de+Yükseköğretim+Sistemi2.pdf>). This official discourse limits universities to "state" instead of "public" and does not point out to the commercial motivation behind the foundation universities. Indeed, since the introduction of the first foundation university in 1984, the higher education area has attracted considerable attention, transforming the field of education into a profitable and competitive business.

the article relies on an analysis of selected interviews, addressing inter-related issues such as the participants' a) level of knowledge concerning the global/regional vision, educational policies and historical milestones of the BP; b) personal experiences during the implementation of the BP in their organizations; c) level of awareness about the criticisms of the BP and organized anti-BP movements in and outside Turkey; and d) personal views concerning the role of higher education and university in society. Participants are drawn from different academic and administrative positions, working for different public and foundation universities (Hacettepe University, Başkent University and TED University).

The literature on the neoliberalization of higher education in general and the BP in Turkey in particular has so far tended to unfold along three axes. First, there is a descriptive and sometimes affirmative literature (Reinalda, 2011; Yağcı, 2010; Dikkaya&Özyakışır, 2006; Kwiek, 2001). Second, there is a newly-emerging literature, which considers the transformations in academic knowledge production and definitions of science (Gibbons, et.al., 1994; Hessels&van Lante, 2008). The third category offers a critical perspective, which considers the ways intersecting axes of oppression (e.g. race, class, gender) are further reinforced through the implementation of neoliberal policy objectives (Giroux, 2014; Soydan&Abali, 2014; Brown&Carasso, 2013; İnal&Akkaymak, 2012; Ercan&Korkusuz-Kurt, 2012; Stech, 2011; Fejes, 2008; Lorenz, 2006; Özbudun&Demirer, 2006; Hill, 2005; Olssen&Peters, 2005; Slaughter&Rhoades, 2004; Peters, 2002). This article builds on the third axis by contributing to existing debates concerning the BP in Turkey. While there are examples for integrating the academics' voices into the studies on the topics worldwide, though not many, (Knuuttila, 2013; Shapin, 2008; Slaughter&Leslie, 1997) in the Turkish context one cannot observe a study that combines historical perspective with *the voices from the field*.

The article is composed of three parts. In the first part we offer a critical reading of the legal regulations concerning higher education in post-1980 Turkey. The second part is reserved for the data, collected from the field. In the final part we discuss the current state of academia in the midst of the neoliberal crisis and the possibilities that it offers for resistance to the neoliberal structuration. We argue that the BP represents the fine-tuning between neoliberal educational policies and statist authoritarianism in the Turkish context as portrayed not only in institutional-legal terms, but also in the accounts of the academics themselves. The dominant discourse in the educational sphere supports our argument: it

is possible to observe repeated emphasis on notions associated with the BP in general. For example, there is constant reference to employability, lifelong learning and stakeholders' weight in the educational design. Here, employability points to the dismissal with the right to work; lifelong learner signifies a parallel tendency to subordinate the principle of the right to lifelong employment. And finally, stakeholders' imply students-as-consumers and market forces.

HISTORICAL BACKDROP TO THE DE/ RE-POLITICIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

The higher education system in Turkey has been going through intensive restructuring since the early 2000s. The roots of this restructuring should be traced in the overall socio-political restructuring process in the post-1980 period. The importance of higher education for the restructuring process is hinted at the LHE, which defined the Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK) as a constitutional organ in 1981, when Turkey was still ruled by a military regime.⁶ In the official discourse, the Council was justified on the grounds that the increase in the number of university students called for a standardized educational policy and administration. It was also claimed that a central body to oversee the university life in its totality would preempt the politicization of the university students and academics that marked the 1960s and 1970s (Tarihçe, n.d.) Thus, the official justification for the institutionalization of a centralized university structure was mainly based on the incapacity of the previous higher education system to offer solid grounds for coordination among different higher education institutions and to ensure a viable system of instruction due to high politicization. This, in turn, hampered the prospects for university autonomy.

University autonomy has been a persistent issue throughout the Republican era. The 1961 Constitution is important for it represents the first instance when universities were considered as constitutional organs and granted constitutional guarantee for autonomy. The 1970s, on the other hand, witnessed restrictions in terms of academic freedom. The justification was that the Constitution provided the grounds for extensive liberties leading to over-politicization among academic personnel and students, which was deemed to hamper routine university education. Thus, the 1971 amendments contained measures such as giving

⁶ A Higher Education Council had already been established in 1973, within the scope of the Law on Universities (No. 1750) to ensure State control over the universities (Dölen, 2010,114-115).

the Council of Ministers the authority to seize administrative power in the universities, and to dismiss academic personnel, as well as bringing in the Council of Higher Education and University Supervisory Board, which might be considered as the precedent of the YÖK. Though university autonomy was not eliminated with these amendments, it would not be inapt to point at the continuity between the 1971 measures and the overall restructuring process in the 1980s (Dölen, 2010).

In the larger picture, it can be argued that YÖK was designed to work in line with the coup spirit: instituting the structural prerequisites for the smooth working of neoliberal transformation in Turkey. This meant authoritarian measures for ensuring depoliticization among the populace, tuned with conservative cultural priorities. During the military regime the political opposition of the 1970s was silenced through bans on political parties, on the leaders and members of the political parties of the previous decade to participate in politics, and the wide scale arrests and imprisonments of the political activists from the left and the right. The dominant discourse of the period labeled any kind of political activism that carried the potential of opposition to the to-be-initiated neoliberal structuration, as marginal and/or extreme (read as threat to national security). While the political ground was secured *vis-à-vis* any socio-political opposition through the narrowing down of the political space, subsequent legal measures were enacted to prepare the legal framework for the new regime. In a nutshell, the military regime set the background to the initiation of neoliberal socio-political ordering, thus pointing the way to a synthesis between the national security discourse and democracy, understood in terms of free market economics. The most persistent assets in this synthesis have so far been a Turkish-Islamic synthesis – as the dominant form of Turkish nationalism in the post-1980 period – and the valorization of private initiative, free market individualism, as the *sine-qua-non* for liberty.⁷ All these assets can be observed in the current state discourse on higher education; thus, the *repoliticization* of the university. In other words, the universities are expected to stay within the boundaries of a conservative-nationalist discourse that is fine-tuned by neoliberal capitalism. Here, repoliticization also involves the state and its related institutions, acting as monitoring agencies over the universities.

⁷ Turkish-Islamic synthesis, developed by nationalist intellectuals in the early 1970s, and later appropriated by the ruling military cadres in the early 1980s, is based on the contention that “The best fit religion for the character and nature of the Turks is Islam. The Turks could not survive with other religions, those who tried, lost their identities” (Güvenç et.al., 1991, 50, quoted in Coşar, 2011, 166). For a detailed analysis of the restructuring of the educational sphere along Turkish-Islamic priorities see Kaplan, 2006.

Nationalism, colored with statism, has been a common asset in higher education legislation. Examples in this respect can be observed in the LHE, especially through the articles related to the aims and principles of higher education:

“educating the students as citizens who are committed to Atatürkist nationalism ... who embrace the national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish nation and who feel honored and happy for being Turk[s], who prioritize common benefit over individual benefit and who are filled with the love for the family, country and nation, who are aware of and habituate their duties and responsibilities toward the ...State ... [and who work for] ...the Turkish State with its indivisible integrity with the land and the nation... to [make it] a constructive, creative and noble partner to the contemporary civilization...” (Article 4, Law No. 2547)

This article sits in the same row with the priorities of critical thinking, scientific outlook and scientific research and accumulation of knowledge (Article 5, Law No. 2547). The coexistence of contradictory aims aside, the law also aims guaranteeing statist loyalties among the students and the academics, by including acting against the state interests into the list of deeds requiring disciplinary action (Yükseköğretim Kurumları, Yönetici, Öğretim Elemanı ve Memurları Disiplin Yönetmeliği, 1982; 2014). Such a contradictory juxtaposition of core values of the modern (European) university and the nationalist motifs within the same educational outlook leads to overemphasis on the latter at the expense of freedom of expression, democracy and human rights. It also delineates the discord with the principles of the BP, as envisaged in the communiqué of the BP 2020-Conference (2009), accepted by 46 countries, including Turkey:

“The aim is to ensure that higher education institutions have the necessary resources to continue to fulfill their full range of purposes such as preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society ... The necessary ongoing reform of higher education systems and policies will continue to be firmly embedded in the European values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social equity and will require full participation of students and staff.”

In line with its authoritarian nature, the law also foresees the risk of “blocking the instruction” as a disciplinary deed, which in the recent

governmental discourse has been posed as a *warning* against oppositional academics, especially with respect to their active involvement, mainly through unions, in opposing the AKP government. A similar style of *warning* can be observed in the YÖK President Gökhan Çetinsaya's statements in the midst of Gezi Resistance that started at the end of May 2013 in İstanbul and spread throughout Turkey, which turned into wide-scale and mass-based opposition first against police violence and subsequently against the government. Briefly, while Çetinsaya emphasized the need for scientific responsibility rather than "daily comments" on socio-political developments, at the same time he indirectly labeled the academics supporting the Resistance and displaying critical stances toward the government for tending to (the discourse of) violence:

"First of all I shall note that the notions of university and violence can never coexist. In democratic and academic traditions everyone is free to express her/his opinions. But this freedom shall not go hand in hand with violence and nobody shall support violence. Those demands, which contain and which praise violence do not accord with the boundaries of academic freedom. The academics shall not approach the spheres of tension – in social, cultural, political issues – with partisanship. In this [Gezi] process we tried to preempt the blocking of education-instruction on the campuses." (Interview with Çetinsaya, 2013).⁸

When one considers YÖK's structure and related legislation this perception of oppositional academics is not surprising. Although the legislation persisted throughout the decades under different governments from various political orientations, there have been certain amendments to the LHE. However, as İnsel (2003) notes, despite more than thirty changes in the Law over the same period, its essence has been kept intact. This can be observed in the resonance between the military discourse and YÖK's disciplinary practices. At the symbolic level the resonance has been functional in the justification of the YÖK as a necessity for preempting the politicization of the universities, with negative reference to the 1970s.⁹ At the policy level it was reflected in

⁸ Here we should note that when the quotation is read in its constative form it tells little more than the YÖK President's denial of violence. But when it is contextualized it is revealed that the President is referring to the academics, involved in and/or sympathetic to Gezi Resistance as perpetrators of violence.

⁹ The 1980 *coup d'état* has been justified by the same style, which contained the claim that the intervention was meant to give an end to the civil strife and political violence in the country due to the incapacity of the civilian bodies to govern.

the organization of YÖK's structure as well as the "top-down, stage by stage authoritarian institutionalization of the higher educational structure" (İnsel, 2003, 76). Today, it is possible to note the continuity in this militaristic style in fulfilling the to-dos and/or getting things done in the adjustment of the university structure to the BP, as devised by the YÖK.

Alongside with the statist-nationalist authoritarian tunes in the LHE, it has been presented as a remedy to the rather scattered, inefficient working of the higher education system. While this style of justification hints at another feature of the YÖK system – the valorization of free market mentality in the sphere of education – it has so far served as a rationale for dissolving the autonomous structure of the universities. Briefly, autonomy of the universities had long occupied the agenda of the governments in Turkey since the 1940s. The decisive turn came with the 1961 Constitution.¹⁰ According to Article 120 of the 1961 Constitution the universities were recognized as "...public corporate entities with administrative and financial autonomy..." (Dölen, 2010, 112). Yet the notion of autonomy was not formed with reference to academic freedom as a priority. On the contrary, while the academics were guaranteed job security by the Constitution via the provision that "the University bodies, staff and assistants cannot be dismissed from duty by the authorities outside the university" (Dölen, 2010, 112), the Law on Universities (No. 115, October 28, 1960) was preceded by the Law on Liquidation (No. 114, October 27, 1960), which formed the legal basis for the dismissal of 147 academics from their posts in the universities (Dölen, 2010, 189-190).

The 1971 military intervention by memorandum was, on the other hand, proclaimed to aim at correcting the 1961 Constitution so as to fit it to the socio-political dynamics in the country. The basic rationale of the military cadres was that the Constitution was too permissive for Turkey. The formula for the enactment of constitutional amendments was devised as forming "supra-parties governments."¹¹ Between 1971 and 1973 Turkey was ruled by four such governments, which passed laws that seriously curtailed the constitutional guarantees for basic rights and liberties (Aydın&Taşkın, 2014, 223-228). In parallel to the rationale that the 1961 Constitution brought in too much liberty to Turkey, Article 120 of the Constitution that concerned the universities was amended. Briefly, the 1971 amendments (Law No. 1488) enabled "the Council of Ministers

¹⁰ 1961 Constitution was devised and enacted immediately after the first military *coup d'état* that Turkey had experienced in 1960.

¹¹ Here, by "supra-parties governments" Aydın and Taşkın point at the coup discourse emphasizing the need for forming governments, which supposedly have no connections with the existing political parties (i.e. technocratic rule).

to suspend the university bodies and the academic personnel in case the liberties of the students and the right to education are endangered” (Dölen, 2010, 114).

Yet, the decisive cut would be introduced by the LHE of 1981. The post-1980 military regime followed the traditional pattern: The Law was shelved until the dismissal of selected academics was managed. In this case martial law (No. 1402) was put into effect in order to curb the university structures from the opponents, and mainly the leftists (Dölen, 2010, 194). The Law was enacted afterwards, in a rather neutralized political milieu. Unlike the 1971 amendments, the law contained no concern, provision, and/or article that opted for academic freedom and university autonomy: internal functioning of the universities was tied to the state organs; the election of the presidents, the deans, and the appointment of the department chairpersons were determined by the YÖK. Likewise, financial autonomy no longer meant the independence of the universities in deciding on the allocation of the state funds, which they received as public institutions within the frame of the right to education. Actually, the issue of university autonomy would arise merely with respect to the initiation of private education, and would take on a different meaning in terms of financial independence. Önal (2012, 131) notes that the introduction of a tuition system to higher education and providing the constitutional grounds for private education can be considered as the initial measures for the later dominance of a neoliberal frame in defining academic freedom. Private education at the higher education level was not constitutionally recognized until 1982. Article 130 of the 1982 Constitution recognized the right of the foundations to “establish higher education institutions on the condition that they do not seek profit” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1982).

The initiation of private education marked the reflection of the neoliberal structuration process in the educational sphere.¹² Private higher education at the university level was managed through the foundation system.¹³ This enabled the emerging private universities to escape from the financial burdens of corporate establishment and functioning, since they have been considered as non-profit institutions, and more importantly to receive financial assistance from the

¹² The first foundation university (Bilkent University, in Ankara, Turkey) was founded in 1984, two years after the military cadres handed over governmental power to civilian political parties.

¹³ According to the related constitutional article (Article 43), “[i]nstitutions of higher education under the supervision and control of the state, can be established by foundations ... provided that they do not pursue lucrative aims” (Önal, 2012, 131).

state budget. More specifically, foundation universities, due to their non-profit institutional status are considered as legal public entities, they have the right to fix their tuition fees on their own; they receive financial support from the state; they have the right to dispose state-controlled lands; they enjoy the same right to tax exemption with the public universities (Soydan&Abali, 2014, 380; LHE, 1982; Vakıf Yükseköğretim Kurumları Yönetmenliği, 2005). The number of foundation universities rapidly increased in the coming decades, reaching sixty-five, compared to one-hundred and four public universities as of March 2014.

The neoliberalization process involved transformation on the plans about the structure, instruction/education and the academic profile in the universities. It can be argued that despite a brief period of autonomous university practice Turkey's higher education system has worked through centralized oversight throughout the Republican era. By the turn in the 1980s the oversight was maintained through the LHE and the YÖK. YÖK's function has so far been twofold. First, it ensures administrative control over the universities so as to preempt the emergence and/or effectiveness of oppositional political groups among the students and the faculty. Second, through the discourse on the need for standardization in scientific production, increasing the quality of education and the efficiency in academic work, it manages the infiltration of free market mentality into the university campuses. The disciplinary regulations for higher education institutions are instrumental to carry out such a task. The regulations are designed so as to depoliticize academic life, hinder political and/or social activism of the students and academics (most directly, unionization and strikes on campuses), with the disciplinary penalty of suspension from public service for the academics, and suspension from higher education for the students (Yükseköğretim Kurumları, Yönetici, Öğretim Elemanı ve Memurları Disiplin Yönetmeliği, 1982; 2014).

All these developments cannot be understood merely in terms of the political milieu of the 1980s. Neither one can satisfy with the analysis of the related legislation. For a more comprehensive analysis, one needs to inquire about the shifting dynamics of the neoliberalization process in Turkey throughout the three decades, which extend beyond the scope of this article. Yet we believe that the BP, which was added to Turkey's neoliberal (education) agenda more recently, offers a snapshot in seeing the basics of neoliberalization in the educational sphere.

THE BP EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY

The BP was first initiated as an attempt to ameliorate the deteriorating higher educational system, which included increasing expenses and low employment rates of university graduates in Western Europe in the late 1990s. The first step was the Sorbonne *Declaration* (1998), emphasizing the need for a pan-European coordination for higher education, to be followed by the Bologna Declaration (1999), aiming for a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The socio-political background to these declarations was shaped by the “shift in the structure of the international education market along neoliberal ideas” (Reinalda, 2011). The recurrent topics of concern in the related meetings, agreements, declarations are “citizens’ mobility,” “employability” (of the graduates), and economic utility (of higher education). The measures, adopted for standardizing higher education brought in a discursive set comprised of an emphasis on flexibility in teaching, flexibility in employment, measurability of the quality of the curriculum and accountability towards the stakeholders. In the BP frame flexibility in teaching is supposed to be achieved through lifelong learning (Güllüpnar and Gökalp, 2014), while flexibility in employment is supposed to rely on performance in terms of learning outcomes. However, it would not be apt to call the BP as essentially a neoliberal project (Reinalda, 2011).

Rather it involved the reformation of the higher education system in European countries, without leading to a “single Bologna model” (Yağcı, 2010, 588). Yet since it evolved within the neoliberal international context and proceeded to extend beyond the boundaries of European Union (EU), including such countries as Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, neoliberal socio-political priorities eventually penetrated into the higher educational reform. In this respect, the BP represents the shifts and relocations in the worldwide accumulation regime in the context of higher education systems. As Hartmann (2008, 217) argues, “what takes shape is a transatlantic norm-setting process,” signifying the flux in the centre of the global neoliberal order. In parallel, it would not be apt to argue that the BP in Turkey points at the hidden agenda of the global imperial actors and thus the government to impose neoliberal educational structure. Rather it is an integral part of the neoliberal order of things.

Turkey has been in the BP since 2001 within the context of its candidacy to the EU membership. The YÖK made it compulsory for the universities to take measures for the adjustment of the higher education system to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (Özgün, 2011).

YÖK has assumed the pivotal role in the adjustment process both as a supervision and coordination agent. It continues with its authoritarian style in getting things done, especially in the case of those universities, which are reluctant to consent to the process. In the process, the universities started (willingly or just technically, or both) to adjust their curricula to the ECTS. This process of a centralized body imposing a certain standardized scheme on the universities evolves through the YÖK's extensive authorities over the universities, the most conspicuous one being the allotment of academic cadres. In line with this extensive authority, according to our field notes and the interview data, the BP in Turkey has so far been working regardless of the opposition that the academics might (or actually) raise against the related measures: The strategy of putting the required amendments as just technical issues on the one hand, and pointing at the risk that relations with the YÖK might (and most probably would) get tense on the other hand, exemplifies forging consent through authoritarian measures. Besides, the curricular adjustment also carries in itself a teaching and education mentality that is based on free market rationality. In this respect, the university-industry relation emerges as the key ingredient in YÖK's discursive practices. Thus, the adoption to the ECTS is directly linked to a utilitarian approach, which calls for the assessment of the value of the knowledge produced and/or transmitted in terms of the utility it raises in the free market (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2010). The most recent development in this regard is the new draft law on YÖK, which contains measures that would open academic work to the evaluation of the industry and government. Briefly, the draft law proposes the involvement of the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology for approving academic research abroad (10 Maddede Yeni YÖK Yasası, 2014).¹⁴ In this

¹⁴ University-industry relation has been a long-standing priority of the neoliberal policy-makers in the educational sphere. In this respect, the Law on the Development of Technology Zones (Date: June 26, 2011; No.: 4691), which forms the basis of the technoparks to be founded in the universities is telling. According to Article 1 of the Law the aim is "to produce technological knowledge, ensure innovation in the product and production methods, increase the quality or standard of the products, increase efficiency, decrease production costs, commercialize technological knowledge, support technology-intensive production and entrepreneurship, ensure the adjustment of small and medium-scaled enterprises to new and advanced technologies, creating investment opportunities in technology-intensive spheres in accordance with the decisions of the Science and Technology Higher Council, creating job opportunities to the qualified researchers, contributing to technology transfer and ensuring the technological infrastructure that would accelerate the flow of foreign capital to the country, which would offer high/advanced technology by enabling cooperation among the universities, research institutions and sectors of production in order to realize an internationally competitive and export-oriented industrial structure" (Teknoloji Bölgeleri Geliştirme Kanunu, 2001). (See Polat, 2013,170-171).

respect, the adjustment to the BP criteria works as a technical tool for the standardization of higher education. Briefly, Hartman's point noted above regarding the BP as a "transatlantic norm-setting process", hints at the use of the BP in the unfolding of the neoliberalization of education. The formula seems quite functional: authoritarian means at home, liberal claims abroad.

The utilitarian approach is further revealed in the discursive strategies employed during the adjustment process. Here, the manipulation of the principles of academic freedom, flexibility in teaching, student-centered instruction and autonomy in the courses is exemplary. Terms and concepts that are put in frequent use in the justification of the BP by the Council are helpful in understanding this manipulation: The terms shareholder/stakeholder, competition-quality and strategy are directly linked to the corporate discourse so as to lay the grounds for the designing of the courses according to free market dynamics and for opening the university education to corporate control. Terms like autonomy, accountability, transparency, quality, learning-centered education, flexibility in learning and lifelong learning are mainly presented as democratic and egalitarian credentials.

However, autonomy is considered as the ability of the universities to raise their own financial resources and the "strategy" to do so is already spelled out: making the industry a shareholder/stakeholder on the campuses. Academic autonomy as such, does not relate to academic freedom in terms of academics' freedom of expression, research and teaching. Accountability and transparency are understood as making the universities open to outside control; "outside" meaning the free market forces. Quality is understood as the quantification of the teaching process, calculated in terms of students' performances in the courses.¹⁵ Learning-centered education is presented as student-centered teaching, with a nod to democratic education philosophy; yet it ultimately connotes the compatibility between the teaching/learning ("learning outcomes") and free market demands. Flexibility in learning is advertised as cross-cutting the strict disciplinary boundaries, and offering the grounds for multi-disciplinarity. In parallel, lifelong learning is presented as a means to keep the individuals sociable and "employable" throughout their

¹⁵ The emphasis on quantification is most manifest in the guidelines for adjusting the course outlines to (what are deemed to be) the Bologna standards. In the guidelines that concern specifically the "learning outcomes" it is recommended to refrain from using such verbs as "knowing, understanding, getting acquainted with, being subject to, being informed about" since they are considered "ambiguous." These terms are considered to fail to meet "measurability, observability and assessability" of what the students learn for the market (Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 2010, 28-29).

lives (MEB, 2009, 30). Both end up with referring to strategies for not educating but training the students into flexible labor force, making them employable, and not offering the grounds for employment (Güllüpnar and Gökalp, 2014). Also in this context not knowledge but information is considered as a yardstick for the social value of individuals. Here, the key term turns out to be measurability, in terms of cost-benefit analysis, on the basis of free-market demands.

NEOLIBERALIZATION THROUGH COOPTATION: ACADEMIA AND THE BP

The emphasis on measurability parallels the technicalization of the BP. While the YÖK presents the BP as a means for the improvement of higher education it does not get into dialogue with the universities, rather it declares the to-dos as technical matters. The same style can also be observed in the accounts of the academic personnel who are in charge of the coordination of the BP. In our research we were especially attentive to avoiding the risk of falling into the technicalities in order not to diverge our attention from the academics' immediate experiences.

As noted at the outset, we conducted interviews in order to achieve the academics experiences regarding the BP, and make their concerns heard since the academics' freedom of expression has been under increasing pressure during the last years. A most commonly used technique for such a dual purpose are semi-structured in-depth interviews (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, 109). As a "knowledge-producing conversation" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, 128), it seeks to understand the meaning of respondent's experience from her/his point of view without imposition (Spradley, 1979, 34); encouraging participants to tell their stories, with their own words and from their own perspective (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003); and penetrating "the defenses people put up to prevent their hidden beliefs from coming to light – defenses that they frequently are not conscious of" (Berger, 1998, 55).

The preliminary interview data encourages us to argue that the academics who are actively involved in the adjustment to the BP in the universities display limited awareness as to the historico-political dynamics of the process. When inquired about the fundamental drives promoting the process they respond with the standard BP designers' and YÖK's formula. Accordingly, the BP is adopted "in order to encourage the mobility of academics, students and the personnel in Europe." For example, Dr. Defne,¹⁶ senior expert in educational measurement and

¹⁶ We use pseudonyms when referring to the interviewees.

evaluation, currently serving as a dean in one of the private universities responded to our question regarding the dominant conceptualization of higher education, university and knowledge production in the BP as follows: “Well, I don’t think the BP suggests anything new on that...All it says is ‘I want to expand the [EHEA]...And for this, I want to introduce certain standards for accreditation procedures.’ The BP doesn’t intervene in universities’ internal policies...” (Interview with Dr. Defne, 2014). This particular reply, ignoring the neoliberal background of the BP, its variation in different EU countries, and its implementation in Turkey through YÖK’s dictates matches the definition on the Council’s official webpage (Bologna Process in Turkey), thus reducing the process into a set of technical measures, while carefully disguising its free market dimension.

Aside from bypassing, there are instances when the academics themselves naturalize the authoritarian, top-down running of the BP. As Dr. Erol (Interview with Dr. Erol, 2014), vice-dean in charge of academic curricula and the BP in a foundation university, notes: “BP is an obligation for us...imposed by the YÖK. There are sanctions, certain official directives and instructions. Everybody must follow. We are talking about YÖK, the superior institution...Nobody has such luxury to say ‘we do not subscribe to this idea.’” The self-surrender that is well-tuned in this account also hints at the permeation of neoliberal approach as the *raison d’être* of the university-knowledge-academic responsibility nexus – that is, getting things done in order to keep your place in the university sector.

Dr. Deniz, who has been responsible for the implementation of the BP in a public university for seven years on the other hand, underlines the authoritarian-cum- technical working of the BP with a totally different concern, and thus in a totally different style (Interview with Dr. Deniz, 2014): “The unit in charge of the BP [in the university] regularly informs us about the procedures or deadlines via official announcements...with a very hierarchical, very patriarchal language...as if someone gives you an order [in the army]...‘those teams in charge of BP: you are requested to finish this and that by the deadline mentioned...’” Actually, all of these remarks give hints about the passivity, read in terms of the dismissal with autonomy and critical thinking, on the side of the universities.¹⁷ While Dr. Erol’s stance and similar stances might be considered as examples of the colonization of the academics’ imagination by the neoliberal educational policy preferences, it seems that others who are more critical

¹⁷ An interview with Dr. Sevgi, a member of an educational commission in charge of the implementation of the BP in a public university, also demonstrates that even those rare voices, relatively critical and active, raised during the regular internal BP meetings, are not heard by the university’s advisory bodies (Interview with Dr. Sevgi, 2014).

about the process lack the means to challenge the process:¹⁸ “I think none of us was sufficiently informed about or aware of the bigger picture when we started to implement the system. The YÖK dictated us: ‘Here is the calendar you must follow... you are obliged to adjust your system by the deadline’” (Interview with Dr. Deniz, 2014).

So, as Dr. Defne notes (Interview with Dr. Defne, 2014): “I do not think the academics were given any chance to discuss the BP before it started to be implemented in Turkey. The process first arrived as something technical... We found ourselves in an incredibly heavy, bureaucratic burden of... adjusting the entire curricula to the new accreditation system until the deadlines. We didn’t even know why we were doing this at the time... and honestly speaking I think this is still the case today.” This top-down mentality is certainly prone to questioning not only by the outwardly critical academics but also by the more neutral ones too. As the Bologna Coordinator in her university who started the interview with her plain remark that the BP neither imposes sanctions nor dictates a new definition for academic activities, Dr. Defne, as the interview proceeded, revealed her suspicion about the effects of the process as “taking away the university from its authentic spirit; jeopardizing the basic values... such as freedom of allocating sufficient time, sufficient effort to your academic work; freedom of thought...” (Interview with Dr. Defne, 2014).

These quotations can be linked to what we noted as the overwhelming technicality in the discourse that surrounds the BP in Turkey, disguising the neoliberal-authoritarian synthesis in related educational policies. The dominance of technicality is also revealed in Dr. Deniz’s accounts. As one of the most well-informed and critical participants, she cannot escape from locating the cumbersome nature of bureaucratic details into the center of her account. Yet she, at the same time, acknowledges the alienating function of the contradiction between what she observes and thinks, and what she does (Interview with Dr. Deniz, 2014):

“I find the BP’s imagination of higher education and university environment quite problematic since the beginning. But then, for years, it’s... me who has been officially responsible... in our faculty, monitoring things that are completely against my understanding... such a schizophrenic way of existence... I have never been able to raise my

¹⁸ Similar tendencies can be observed in the EU countries. Reinalda (2011, p.4) notes that “despite the fact that teachers and staff have to implement the changes set in motion in their disciplines ... the initiating Ministers of Education did not invite any professional or other organization of university staff to consultative membership.”

voice during the meetings once, and say something like ‘that is all ridiculous’...My thoughts, ideas, criticisms, political stance...all are parenthesized during such meetings.”

One might expect that such a critical stance, though silenced, calls for counter movements to the transformation process, as evidenced not only in Europe but also in the Latin American context against the “tuning project” (Aboites, 2010). Yet none of the participants are informed about the global counter movements, or as we observed in some cases, they are reluctant to share their personal opinions. Dr. Erol, in parallel to his approach to the whole transformation process and the Council’s role in it “googled” the words “Bologna Process, student protest” on his office PC, and then continued: “What do these people complain about? Cultural corruption? Imperialist influence? These are completely meaningless. It’s the EU who is giving you [the students, protesting] the money, not us...” (Interview with Dr. Erol, 2014).¹⁹

Besides, it would be apt to note that the trade unions in the education sector have not yet taken the BP on their agendas as a particular issue. They have rather treated it through general opposition against neoliberalization, and thus have not developed specific strategies in order to counter the policies implemented gradually at each and every stage of the process.

CONCLUSION

Although the rhetorical packaging behind the neoliberal discourse manipulates respecting democratic values and diversity of voices and thoughts, the last decade of higher education in Turkey demonstrates that it operates through a collective performance of illusion of democracy and power of autocracy that values only the voices of the market, whereas the main voices and subjects in academia are keenly excluded. This is in line with Couldry’s (2014, 135) assertion that dominant discourses of neoliberalism, under the disguise of seemingly democratic values such as individual’s/consumer’s freedom of choice, does not value voice; in fact, it “denies the voice”. Looking at the last thirty years

¹⁹ This rather rough rationalization can be considered as a neoliberal mark on the academic mind, which Rhoades and Slaughter (2004, 37) name as “academic capitalism.” Although coined specifically with reference to the “marketization” of higher education in the US the term recalls what can be read in-between the lines of the documents on the BP in Turkey: “strategic decisions about the development, investment in and delivery of curriculum are being increasingly driven by short-term market considerations and made outside the purview of shared governance” (Ibid., 47); hence the dominance of utilitarian mentality.

of neoliberal policies in Britain, Couldry, who, together with McRobbie, had once announced “the death of the idea of the university” (2010), argues that “neoliberal democracy” is an oxymoron, responsible for the “social recession” that preceded the economic recession (2014, 2).²⁰ By this, Couldry implies that the neoliberal mentality, working through the illusion of liberty and estimating all facets and the purpose of life in economic terms creates social decay. Academia is by no means immune to such social crises and recessions. As the rich critical literature testifies, through the policies promoting market-oriented solutions for persisting educational problems, positioning the academics as self-absorbed competitors instead of public intellectuals, and replacing academic/social values with commercial ones, neoliberalism has transformed not only the core of higher education around the world, but perhaps more significantly “*how we think and what we do as teachers and learners*” (Robertson, 2007, 11, italics in original). The state control over the universities in post-1980 Turkey has worked in a similar way. All the policies that have been gradually implemented throughout the three decades targeted the “subversive [nature of] the social and intellectual role of the university” (Chomsky quoted in Grioux, 2006, 65-66) and pacifying the “engaged public intellectual [who] must function within institutions, in part, as an exile, ‘whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma...to refuse to be easily co-opted by governments or corporations’” (Said, quoted in Grioux, 2006, 73).

The BP can be considered as an example of this pacifying strategy.²¹ It is initiated, controlled and manipulated by the YÖK as the sole authority; the universities are forced directly or indirectly to adjust to the educational models, devised within the BP frame. And as the interview data suggest, academics –irrespective of their position *vis-à-vis* the BP – consider the recent transformations as another top-down intervention into the field of higher education. They tend to see the to-dos as part of their professional and administrative duties, willingly or not, but certainly with a high sense of responsibility to follow the instructions given by the university board or the YÖK; respect the deadlines

²⁰ Couldry and McRobbie’s critical essay addresses the *Browne Report*, defining the higher education as a market where the services (education) are merely determined by student choice, and introducing “a system for distributing resources based on individual market choice” in order to “somehow generate the system that society needs” (2010, 3). Couldry borrows the concept “social recession” from Lawson (2007) who sees the free-marketization of every aspect of life as the source of major social crises in contemporary capitalist societies: “Neoliberalism promised a utopia but has failed to deliver (...) Working harder to keep up on the treadmill of the learn-to-earn consumer society is deepening our social recession.”

²¹ On the pacification process in post-1980 Turkey see, Özcan (2014).

announced in a dutiful manner; and continue their everyday academic practices under given conditions.²² Perhaps the active involvement of academia awaits the finalization of the free-marketization of higher education – that is to say, the liquidation of critical academic groups, and the consolidation of the new specialist and technician cadres as the main actors in the universities.

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²² Although her ethnographic research deals with the new administrative policies and “managerialism” in academia, this resembles what Polster (2012, 115) argues in relation to Canadian universities: “[A]cademics are seeing and responding to these practices as isolated developments that interfere with or add to their work, rather than as reorganizers of social relations that fundamentally transform what academics do and are. As a result, their responses often serve to entrench and advance these practices’ harmful effects.”

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Rebellious Responses to the Walmartization of Canadian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Canadian higher education has been heading in a general neoliberal direction for quite sometime with most universities employing similar strategies. The example of Wilfrid Laurier University is used to first illustrate some of those strategies and then later on to show a relatively new one. WLU's Integrated Planning and Resource Management (IPRM) process is very much like similar processes being undertaken at a number of Canadian Universities. It is a management strategy to more easily enable unpopular cuts to staff and programs and legitimate the process through enlisting faculty "cooperation". The APRM is the faculty union's commissioned alternative report and will be a focal point of resistance with its very different set of recommendations. However, an argument is also made that, though while worthwhile, such-like actions will not nearly be enough to prompt a significant change in institutional direction. It is argued that though there are many prongs to the neo-liberal attack upon higher education, the most significant one is the casualization of its teaching labour force. It is argued that strong action by tenured and tenure track faculty is required to not only eradicate the injustices inherent in the situations of our contract academic colleagues but that this is actually the key to preserving quality education.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberalism, Education, Casual Labour, Resource Management, Austerity

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INTRODUCTION

Walmart: The High Cost of Low Price was a documentary film showing the uglier side of the corporation. If cost cutting and cheap products are two of Walmart's prominent characteristics, and if a hidden but nonetheless extremely high cost, is also part of the neoliberal management of the higher education sector, then Walmartization is indeed an apt metaphor to apply to Canadian higher education.² Some would even assert that with the Walton Family Foundation becoming the major source of private funding support for the development of charter-school alternatives to public schools Walmartization is more than a metaphor (Martinkich, 2014).

But there are more similarities between higher education and Walmart as well. There is an ever increasing reliance upon cheap casual labour. There is a constant aggressive expansion of universities, both in a physical sense, a never ending building program, and in terms of student numbers. Understandably universities are leaders in technological innovation but they are also at the forefront of the battle to manage and control it. There is also a constant review of its various "systems": systems of knowledge delivery, systems of administration, systems of resource allocation. This last review, the review of resource allocation, will be the particular focus of this article, as a focal point of this Walmartization process and as a site of resistance to it. The hidden, high cost of this Walmartization of higher education is the destruction of quality education. The hidden, high cost is the end of the university as an institution in any presently recognizable form.

First, I provide an overview of the strategies and policies commonly implemented by Canadian universities in the last few decades. I then discuss faculty involvement in a certain kind of resource allocation exercise as one of the more recent processes imposed upon them. This has been attempted in a number of Canadian institutions but I will focus upon my own university – Wilfrid Laurier – as an example to illustrate most of my points. Next, again using my own university and my own union, I discuss two different sorts of "rebellious responses". The first of these is already being done; while the second may never be, but is instead being presented as an analysis, an argument and a call to action. It is an intervention in those ongoing Marxist questions: Who will educate the educators? And what is to be done?

² For further utilizations of Walmartization in relation to higher education see, for example: Bios, 2013; Hoeller, 2014.

STRATEGIES OF THE CANADIAN NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

Government regulation and financing of education in Canada is a mixture of federal and provincial responsibility, with the latter having the greatest responsibility, effects and control over direction. The kind of governance they provide varies by province from year to year dependent upon the vagaries of electoral politics. However, there is nonetheless a country-wide common trend. This has been in accord with an even broader trend internationally in the English speaking countries of New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the US. The trend is to move toward neoliberal ideals of educational service, to acting upon short term economic interests, to privatizations, and most crucially, to a cost-benefit analysis being the guiding principle of resource allocation. This broad ideological context internationally has framed the more particular policy direction and strategies that will be outlined below.³

The first thing to note is that there has been an enormous expansion of student enrollment in the last decades or so. But this expansion in numbers has been without a corresponding increase in the government financing of universities. The trend can be clearly seen for Ontario in Table 1. Wilfrid Laurier has doubled its enrollment in the last five years (Wilfrid Laurier, 2014).

Table 1: Summary of Fall Term Full-time Enrollments in Ontario Universities, 2003-04 - 2012-13

2003-04	312,987	2008-09	367,150
2004-05	330,772	2009-10	383,805
2005-06	346,673	2010-11	397,653
2006-07	355,763	2011-12	409,569
2007-08	359,250	2012-13	419,963

Source: Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2014.

A single sentence from the Report of the Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education to the Ministry of Training,

³ There is a large and growing scholarly literature upon various aspects of neoliberal reforms and its philosophical framing of issues affecting higher education management. See for example: Tores and Schugurensky, 2002; Sears, 2003; Lipman, 2011.

Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in 1996 sums up the Ontario policy direction for the past decade: “Historically, colleges and universities have demonstrated their ability to accommodate increased enrollment demand in an environment of constraint.”

Professors, both full-time and sessionals, have often acceded to the constant administrative pressure to “do more with less”. This certainly includes more marking and administrative responsibilities, but it is questionable whether this includes more educationally.

I support the democratization of education, including higher education. But I do not believe that an increased percentage of the population attending university simply achieves this. While the underfunded expansionary policies of government and university administrations has resulted in a number of things, a better educated populace is not one of them. The first thing to result from the “do more, with less policies”, were larger class sizes, often much larger. This point was made in dramatic fashion in a joint Senate and Board of Governors (BoG) meeting at Laurier. One of my colleagues, Thomas Hueglin, had taught the then Chair of the BoG twenty-five years earlier. He asked the Chair if he remembered the class and received a complimentary reply. He then followed with a question as whether he remembered the size of the class. Twelve or fifteen was the reply. “Well” said Thomas, “I’m glad you liked the class. I still teach it. Only this term the class size is one hundred and seventy-five!”.

Small seminar classes still exist of course, though now usually only in the students’ final year. The large introductory classes are now largely devoid of written work because the marking load would simply be too onerous. Written assignments have been shifting more and more to machine marked multiple choice assessment. This educational choice was certainly not thought desirable by any professor. Rather it was and is a pragmatic response to increased class sizes. In order to enable a higher percentage of Ontario high school students to attend university required a lowering of entrance requirements. This manifested itself particularly at Laurier in the Faculty of Arts. These lower entrance requirements went along with a simultaneous general grade inflation in high school. In an interview with journalist Michael Woods, James Côté, a sociology professor at the University of Western Ontario, notes:

“When the Ontario Scholar program was introduced in the 1960s, average performers were C-students and A-students were considered exceptional...Now, 90 per cent of Ontario students have a B average

or above, and 60 percent of students applying to university have an A average.”

Grade inflation is also occurring at the university level because we were not only supposed to admit these “lower achievers” but to retain and hopefully graduate them. The lowered entrance requirements for Laurier’s Arts Faculty produced a crisis in the Fall term of 2010 (The Cord, 2011): After closely monitoring their fall-term data for the first time in recent years, the faculty of arts has discovered an alarming statistic – out of five first-year arts students, approximately two are at a high risk of landing on academic probation or not being able to declare their major in second year. Thus, an ever increasing amount of time and resources was needed to address this crisis in order to retain these students. Thus, more and more time is needed to be spent upon remedial instruction. While many students are ‘getting through’, this strategy overall is resulting not in a better educated public but rather a public with a higher proportion of academic credentials. Both the politicians and the university administrators seem content with this.

AUSTERITY BUDGETING AND SURPLUS TRANSFERS

As Naomi Klein (2007) argued in *The Shock Doctrine*, a crisis is a way of achieving otherwise unpopular changes. The crisis need not be real. As CAUT Director Jim Turk (in Kershaw, 2009) asserted: “What is publicly perceived as a crisis can be a convenient opportunity to push through changes that administrators may want even when the circumstances at a particular university don’t justify them.” Senior administrators, particularly the Finance Vice-Presidents, are perpetually telling their university communities that we are in very bad shape financially. They scare us about our pensions. And they insist on austerity budgets. So, we never get the budgetary increases necessary to deal with the burdens of the increased student numbers. And we often get cuts. We get cuts to course stipends available, cutbacks to program offerings and demands for penny pinching savings to be made to normal office or teaching practices.

An example of this last sort of cut at Laurier was the decree that we could no longer afford to pay for the printing of course outlines. So instead of the usual practice of instructors at the beginning of courses to pass out course outlines to students and go over them, we now simply tell them to download them and print them themselves from the website. Well, some students do this, some students do not. Some students prefer

to individually email their instructors to ask them for the relevant pieces of information, as and when it occurs to them. This “money saving” policy, in terms of the additional time spent by instructors emailing, seems like a false economy.

Oftentimes there are surpluses at the end of the budgetary year. These surpluses, however, seldom go back into operational budgets, which includes staff and faculty wages, heating and light and materials, etc. Rather they are transferred into the capital fund. This is reserved for real estate acquisitions and construction costs. Laurier, it seems (and this may certainly apply to other universities), is increasingly a real estate and holding company, as much as an educational institution. We are buying and selling; we are renters and rentees; we are constantly tearing down and building.

Apparently we do this well. Laurier has got a good deal renting prime space in a downtown Toronto building. Our recent sixty million dollar apartment purchases alongside the Waterloo campus are set to bring in rental profits for years to come. This is why the BoG, with their preponderance of a business people membership, cannot see any problem. Yes, we are buying and selling and building. But we are also profiting on this. This is precisely the neoliberal vision, the bottom line as they say. But while we are making millions in the real estate game, we still cannot afford to give our students course outlines, or an Anthropology Department (Laurier’s was recently abolished). This is because the transfers of surplus from operations to capital are never transferred back because the profits made in real estate never come back to pay for actual education, only buildings.

The University of Western Ontario has had a similar situation to Laurier’s in this regard (as have had most other Ontario universities). The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (AWOFA) recently commissioned some financial analysts to prepare a report on the issue, entitled *Every Budget is a Choice* (University of Western Ontario, 2014, p.3). It is worth quoting from this document at length:

“When we hear that our employer doesn’t have funds available to hire the normal contingent of contract academic staff, or to give pay increases that match those at other universities, it is because they have funds tied up in assets – investments, buildings and equipment – and are unwilling to liquidate any of their investments or finance buildings and equipment through debt in order to allow them more cash to meet operational needs. What they are saying is that when

money is used to fund capital projects, or is invested, that is where it stays. This creates a one-way street: money doesn't ever flow back to the operating fund to help with operating deficits or rising costs, or to maintain an appropriate staffing level, no matter how flush the capital or reserve funds are. It would only require a change in policy for the board of governors to transfer money back into the operating fund. *At this university, at this time, any shortfall of operating funds is an artificial problem of the board's own making.*"

CASUAL LABOUR: THE KEYSTONE OF THE WALMARTIZATION PROCESS

It is a simple strategy that worked for Walmart and seems to be working for higher education as well. Universities are replacing tenure-track and tenured full-time professors with a casual labour force to do the teaching. This is what contract academic labour essentially is: casual labour. Adjuncts, as they are called in the US, sessionals as they are called in Canada, are very low paid, have extremely tenuous job security and few, if any, benefits. Fortunately, Canada has public health coverage, which, of course makes Canadian sessionals immediately much better off than their American colleagues. But they still lack such things as dental coverage or supplements to health insurance for prescription drug purchases, for example, and quite crucially they lack a pension plan.

Sessionals have historically been called part-timers. This is not only a very misleading term, it is positively insulting. As a tenured professor my full-time teaching load is four course units – two courses each term. Many of the contract academic faculty at WLU teach three courses a term here and sometimes another three in the Spring and Summer terms. Many, of course, do not do all their teaching at Laurier's main campus but have their teaching split between campuses (an hour apart by car and impossible to reach by public transit). Many do not do all their teaching at Laurier at all as they teach for multiple universities. A character in a recent novel – *Fight for Your Long Day* by Alex Kundera (2010) – taught at four different universities in Philadelphia. This novel might be fiction but it was grounded in the realities of the Canadian, as well as the American, adjunct/sessional experience.

Most American adjuncts are much worse off than their Canadian colleagues in matters of pay as well. Few of them are unionized, which contributes to a situation where the pay scale of the Canadian underpayment of teaching would seem like a positively utopian dream to them.

But it is no utopia. Were a sessional at Laurier to teach twice as many courses as I do (and many, of course, do) their pay would still be (literally) less than half of mine. Expanding class sizes is not sufficient alone to make the “do more with less” strategy work. An ever increasing casualization of the academic workforce is in fact absolutely key to the whole process of the transformation of universities into big box stores of educational credentials.

THE NEXT STEP IN THE NEOLIBERAL ONSLAUGHT

So far the replacement of tenure-track and tenured full-time professors with a casual labour force has mainly been done by not replacing tenured retirees with tenure track positions and by ensuring that the new teaching requirements of the university (because of the enormous expansion in student numbers) has mainly been filled by contract academics. But this is not sufficient. A new strategy is required for the further cuts to staff and programs required to achieve the neoliberal multi-campus, mega-university ideal.

Senior administrators are aware that these coming cuts will be very unpopular among faculty. Thus, with the help of some American consultants, they have devised a way to head off such resistance as may be generated in advance through enlisting the faculty’s aid, through giving them an emotional and intellectual investment in making the cuts, and by also causing the faculty to fight among themselves.⁴ The Integrated Planning and Resource Management (IPRM) process was thus initiated at Laurier. The IPRM is simply the Laurier variant of a larger process called ‘program prioritization’ developed by U.S.-based consultant Robert Dickeson and implemented at a variety of universities in that country. This American process is now being exported to Canada where a small number of universities – including the University of Saskatchewan, Brock, York, Guelph and Laurier – are implementing this method (Salatka and Kristofferson, 2014).

The university’s web page (WLU, 2014) describes it thus: “A resource-allocation process will be developed that will then be utilized to direct resources to the major academic and administrative priorities of the university”. In other words: the process will decide where cuts to staff and academic programs are to be made. It should be emphasized that implementing cuts is something that was being planned anyway. Although this would be vigorously and directly denied by the

⁴ See Dickeson, 2010. And for a specific critique of Dickeson’s thinking see Heron, 2013.

administration as being the purpose of the IPRM exercise. Rather they would say things like ‘the process is to discover our strengths and weaknesses and to channel resources toward areas of excellence’. (I am paraphrasing here things repeated many, many times in the Senate debates about whether or not to implement the process). However, they are quite correct to assert that the process is not all about making cuts. This was going to be done anyway. Rather the process is very significantly about ideologically legitimating such cuts. It states on the Laurier website (WLU, 2014): “The Planning Task Force is strongly represented by faculty and will approve the prioritization criteria for both academic and administrative areas”. Translation: we want you to make the cuts for us!

The recommendations the IPRM makes will still have to be approved by Senate, as the legally constituted academic decision making body of the university and by the BoG as the financial decision making body. A good deal of time and energy was spent in Senate discussing and debating this and its ultimate decision making powers were affirmed. However, I believe many missed the ideological point with respect to the initiative. When the IPRM issues its report and recommendations in the Fall of 2014, the process will have involved a huge number of person-hours. Estimates were for three hours a week, from something like sixty faculty on the IPRM’s various committees, for two years. This is not to mention that all the university’s faculty and staff have had to have meetings and fill out forms and templates as well. All of this effort thus meant for some, a tremendous investiture of emotion, as well as time. People working so hard and so long in a process quite naturally become emotionally invested in it. When it comes time to implement the recommendations to discontinue programs or layoff staff members, it will be much harder to argue against such after this long lead up involving so many faculty and staff. Further many faculty in departments and programs that are feeling very secure in terms of possible cuts, have short-sightedly concluded that the process may be advantageous to them. So, staff and faculty are also divided among themselves. From the point of view of a neoliberal political strategist, it is a brilliant initiative.

RESISTANCE TO THE IPRM

There were probably some faculty members in many departments that thought the IPRM was a good idea. There were also quite certainly a great many that did not. But resistance and support for the process was not distributed evenly throughout the university. Unsurprisingly, the greatest support for the, at time of writing still ongoing process, is to be found among

the Business and Economics faculty (SBE). First, many SBE faculty members share the same neoliberal viewpoint that the administration does. Second, those in SBE who believe that the IPRM process may possibly benefit their particular department or faculty or that at least it won't disadvantage it, are likely correct. Very definitely, all faculties are not equal in terms of, well, anything. There is a growing disparity between the Faculty of Arts and SBE. It is evident in terms of average faculty salaries and in the buildings in which their respective offices and classrooms are located. A new, very expensive Business faculty building is now under construction.

But the inequality between these faculties most relevant in terms of this article's argument, concerns student admissions. What was earlier alleged concerning the general dumbing-down of the neoliberal university is a very unevenly applied situation. Thus, the grade admission average for a Business Administration honours BBA degree program for 2013 was 87.5 Percent. The average entrance to the Bachelor of Arts honours BA program was only 75 percent (WLU, 2014). This difference also accords well with the neoliberal vision of the university being primarily about directly servicing the economy. The greatest opposition to the IPRM has not only come from the Faculty of Arts, however, but from the two faculties – The Faculty of Human and Social Sciences and The Faculty of Liberal Arts – at the Brantford campus. There is a definite political disjuncture in terms of radicalism and resistance between the Waterloo and Brantford campuses. It has a simple political-material basis. In the preceding fifteen years of Laurier's general expansion, Brantford went from near nothing to begin with in 1999 (five administrators and only two part-time faculty) to today's figure of 2700 students. The new tenure-track, but then still untenured faculty, during this period at the Waterloo campus, sometimes had onerous service demands placed upon them. But nearly all of the Brantford faculty members had this experience. For a time nearly the entire Brantford faculty was untenured. They were untenured but forced to head programs and perform other time consuming administrative tasks at the very same time in their career as they faced the greatest demands of time for research and publication to ensure they received their tenure. Management was not very sympathetic to this. These early years created lasting resentments and a greater politicization of the workforce.

At any rate, the Brantford campus has led the IPRM opposition thus far. At the beginning not a single faculty member volunteered to be a part of it. And more recently the two Brantford faculties passed motions expressing a lack of confidence in the methodology of the process. The Waterloo campus Faculty of Arts quickly followed them and passed a

similar motion. Below is the original Brantford Faculty of Liberal Arts (Council Minutes, February 3, 2014) motion:

Be it resolved that the concept, method, data collection and analysis of the Integrated Planning and Resource Management process is so fundamentally flawed that this body has no confidence that it will provide reliable information upon which sound academic decisions can be made. As such, this body calls for the immediate cessation of the activities of the IPRM and the return of academic decision-making to the Senate, its rightful place as established by the WLU act.

Regardless of these calls for cessation, the process continues. However, there is another equally significant piece of resistance underway. The Alternative Planning and Resource Management (APRM) report is being researched and written. This is an intended shadow process to the IPRM commissioned by the faculty union (WLUFA) and I am the chair of the committee entrusted with this.

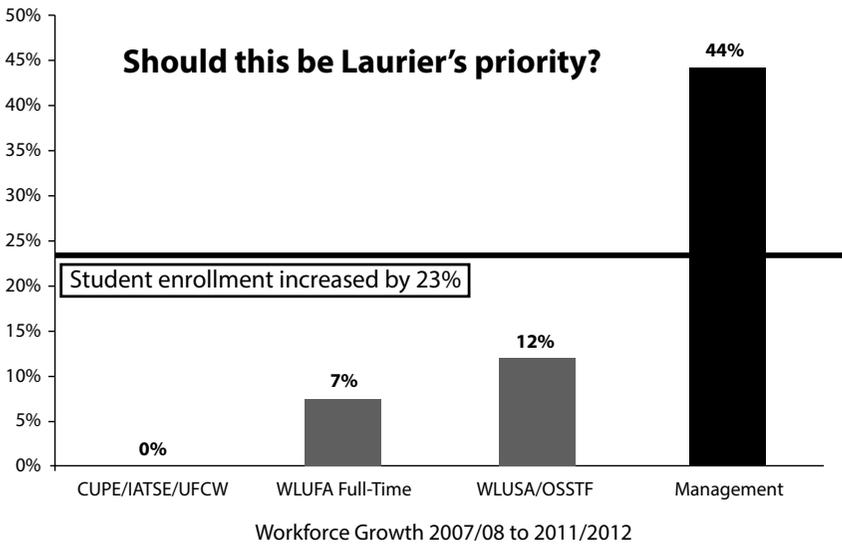
It is interesting to note with regard to faculty involvement in this process the degree of fear connected to it. The researching and writing of this report is a collaborative effort involving staff and contract academic faculty. However, it is only the full-time faculty members' names which will appear on the report. Contract faculty and staff members fear identification and management reprisals and so (perhaps wisely) have chosen to remain anonymous.

The APRM will have a radical set of recommendations. The first and foremost of these will counter directly the IPRM. We will recommend that there need be no cuts to programs and staff. Further, this recommendation will include the clarification that "no cuts to programs" also includes the kind of cuts disguised as mere amalgamations of programs and departments. In preparing this report we have had the benefit of the University of Saskatchewan experience. Their IPRM equivalent process, labeled "TransformUS", while still not complete, is further along than our own. In the College of Arts and Science, TransformUS will likely merge women's and gender studies, philosophy, modern languages and religion and culture programs into a new department. Those departments feature popular classes, but few people graduate with degrees from the departments, said Peter Stoicheff Dean of Arts and Science. He said he doesn't see the changes as cutting programs, but rather building a new department that retains popular classes from the shuttered departments (Warren, 2014). "Shuttered departments", of course,

referring to departments that were cut. To imply otherwise is simply deceptive administrative-speak.

While our report will clearly state that we neither accept the need for austerity budgets nor the neoliberal reductive bottom-line ideology that reduces all to simply financial cost-benefit analyses, we do hope to hoist them by their own petard, so to speak. We will be looking at the proliferation of senior administrative positions from a cost-benefit point of view. As Table 2 illustrates, while staff and faculty increases have lagged well behind student enrollment increases, senior administrative positions have greatly exceeded them.

Table 2: WLU Workforce Growth



*WLU HR Annual Report of 2011-2012

Source: Human Resources Annual Report, 2011-12

Neither Laurier, nor indeed Canada, is unique in their senior administrative proliferation, as the US experience equally indicates (Ginsberg, 2011). But it does call into question the honesty of then Council of Universities (COU) President, Paul Genest, when he asserted: “You could get rid of the entire senior level of an administration and you would still be seeing a number of our universities trying to wrestle a deficit to the ground.” (Kershaw, 2009).

In countering such proposals, we will be recommending a comprehensive, fully transparent review of Laurier's senior administration, including hiring practices, compensation, bonuses, travel funds and so on. We will also recommend that the review seriously consider the need for any of these positions in the first place, bearing in mind that from a cost-benefit perspective none of them are revenue generating. To put this in perspective, the yearly cost of all the teaching of the Cultural Analysis and Social Theory Master of Arts (MA) Program and the Sociology MA Program together with all the teaching of the Archaeology Department (at least as considered in terms of the value of contract faculty stipends) is actually considerably less than the salary for the Vice-President Student Services. These executives are paid large sums in order to allegedly make important decisions that will effect the WLU student community. And yet, the biggest decision made by the position's current occupant was to privatize food services.

Finally, we shall recommend a reversal of the budget transfers from operations to capital projects. We are making profits out of real estate and have accumulated enormous assets. Laurier's total assets over the course of May 2011 to May 2013 was \$128,000,000 (WLU Budget, 2013). We propose, putting some of that one hundred and twenty-eight million back into education, perhaps even by reducing class sizes. This report will also be made fully public; in addition to sending it to the union membership and the student union newspaper, we will send it to relevant ministers, and members of both provincial and federal parliament. It will also, of course, be sent to the Senate and the BoG. But we are under no illusions about its recommendations being followed. It will be a consciously political document, intended to provoke thought and discussion, to fire a shot, so to speak, across the bows of both the Laurier administration and the politicians who so poorly govern education in the province and country. We hope it shall have some resonance with public discussions about the future of higher education. But we know this will not be nearly enough to fundamentally change the neoliberal directions higher education is heading in. To have a chance of affecting that something much bigger is required to be done.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The most obvious aspect of the Canadian (and certainly Wilfrid Laurier's) neoliberal university not yet mentioned in this article is the increased corporate involvement with universities. WLU came very close to receiving academic censure from the Canadian Association of

University Teachers (CAUT) for its, and the University of Waterloo's, official governance regulations for their Basillie School of International Affairs because it gave a hitherto unprecedented degree of corporate power over academic decision making. But universities are becoming increasingly dependent upon corporate funding. And corporations, unsurprisingly, are wanting increased control as their price for donations. This process has been written about extensively elsewhere (Bradshaw, 2012; Polster, 2008). However, it is not, I believe, the most serious challenge presented by the Walmartization of higher education in Canada. It could well become so, but we have not yet reached that stage. In my view, the key issue is the situation of contract academic faculty. It is central to both the overall problem and to its solution, if there is ever to be one.

At one time faculty were the senior administrators of the university. They would undertake these tiresome but necessary chores for short durations, a few years perhaps, and then go back to the much more important business of teaching and doing research. But that is certainly no longer true. If a university president once taught and researched, it is something long abandoned and never to be returned to (if they had such an academic background at all). Today, university administrators are professional managers. Thus, faculty lost all control over the university long ago. And to save higher education they need to get it back. The governance of most Canadian universities is bicameral, consisting of a BoG and a Senate, with the former having responsibility for financial decision making and the latter for academic matters. In practice, there is no clear separation between academic issues and financial ones. Academic decisions frequently have financial consequences and more crucially the financial decisions of the BoG completely determine the boundaries of possibility for academic activities. There is staff, faculty and student representation on the BoG but such is largely token. The majority of the Board membership is drawn from the business community, and thus have little problem with the neoliberalization process.

In one of the Senate meetings at Laurier when we were still fighting the initiation of the IPRM process, a faculty supporter of the administration admonished Senators with a lecture to us asserting that we must be "financially responsible". A couple of weeks later I referenced this speech and quoted this phrase while addressing the BoG. But I added that if that is so for Senators, the other side of bicameral governance was that Board members must demonstrate academic responsibility in their decision making. I concluded my little speech with a polemical

flourish: “This isn’t no burger chain we’re running here people”. Blank faces greeted this remark. It appears that the distinction between corporations and universities was lost upon many of them. If the university is making money then any decisions that facilitate that process are wise ones, seemed to be the general opinion.

The composition of a university’s Senate is legally inscribed in its founding act and thus is very hard to change. WLU has a “plus one” clause in its -- that is to say, faculty, student and staff representation at Senate need have one more member than the administration. However, given that this grouping would have to have complete unanimity (and total attendance) in practice to ever defeat an always united administration, it means that the Senate is a largely impotent body. The fact that unanimity is rarely achieved even amongst Senators from other faculties other than SBE and that SBE has strong sympathies with a neoliberal vision, means that the Senate can achieve little in terms of putting a brake upon the present direction in which we are headed. So what can be done to halt or reverse the bad direction in which higher education is heading? There is little hope to be had from our existing university governance institutions. There is also little hope to be had from government policies. And there is little hope to be had that either students or the general public will insist upon progressive changes. Students seem to live with a perception of an eternal present of massive class sizes (“hasn’t it always been like this?”). This leaves only the faculty, as the most directly knowledgeable and invested party, to do something about the situation.

But the faculty is divided in many ways and their sole organ of institutional representation and self-defence – the faculty association union - is an imperfect one. A great many sessionals are well aware of not only the injustice inherent in their own personal situation but have a sophisticated political generalization of it. Many are ready to fight. However, sessionals at any university are a very divided group. Many of them, still early in their career, are living with the delusion that a past reality still exists. In other words, once upon a time, sessional teaching could be regarded as simply a stage in their career, a final apprenticeship stage before the tenure-track position. This still is the reality for a few, but statistically this reality belongs to the past. Many sessionals are well aware of this fact but nonetheless still live in a personalized state of denial; no matter how long the odds are of them getting a tenure-track position, they cling to the belief it will happen. They don’t have time for politics with the teaching load they carry and research agenda

they set for themselves. Then, of course, there are the long-time sessional faculty, who have so many different employers and workplaces that to be politically involved in all of them would be impossible. In essence, what I am arguing here is that the contract faculty themselves have structural weaknesses built into their collective situation, so as to make strong coordinated resistance near impossible. Evidence of this is the persistence of their dire situation over years and years.

Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty have no such deep structural weakness that would prevent coordinated action. Yet, the situation for them is far more ironic. This group, at the top of the heap of salaried knowledge workers, whose occupations are much more of a calling than merely a job, who have a direct vested interest in a good education system, are themselves the ones in most need of political education. Who indeed, will educate the educators?

While tenured faculty do not have direct structural impediments to coordinated political action there are, nonetheless, structural impediments to transcending the neoliberal ideologies that impede the development of political consciousness. In a way, privilege not only begets privilege but it also clouds awareness of privilege. For example, as a group, full-time faculty do less of the teaching of the very large lower level service classes and instead teach more of the higher year seminars and graduate courses. There is thus a polarized collective experience of teaching realities. In a nutshell, the situation for full-timers just doesn't seem so bad at the moment so as to demand political consciousness and struggle. Collectively they have been insulated from many of the harsher changes that have come in recent years.

It takes but a moment of reflection for full-time faculty to realize that regardless of the situation of higher education getting worse and worse, their own personal situation is one of privilege. They are impacted by increasing administrative burdens placed upon them, by increased numbers of students requiring remedial instruction, by growing class sizes (though it is much more frequently the contract faculty that teach the lower level mega-classes). But still they are paid well and have benefits; they have time for research; and are privileged. Most faculty are aware of their privilege. However, many of them have also been disciplined by the experience of precariousness and fear that led to finally reaching the promised land of tenure. Few put it to themselves in terms of a choice with respect to collective action. Few put it to themselves with respect to deciding to protect the future of higher education, or even their own situation, if they are to remain part of it long enough.

The choice is a simple one. The first alternative is to continue not to look beyond the end of your own nose and be ready to fight for two things only. The two things I refer to are simply reactive to the (so far) relatively minor administrative assault upon faculty privilege: pay and pensions. If the university administration pushes too hard upon these issues full-time faculty will likely be willing to strike. My argument here is that there is another choice possible. There is a different set of things entirely that full-time faculty ought to be willing to strike for. And make no mistake, powerful, determined and coordinated action by the faculty is the only thing that will even possibly slow or reverse the Walmartization process. Of course, we will also need to involve the students. We will need to make them much more aware of hierarchies and the practical ways that “our teaching conditions, are their learning conditions” (LaFrance and Sears, 2012,). The fight I am proposing, that could be and should be undertaken, could be done much more easily than actual Walmart workers effecting political change. They are as yet un-unionized. Canadian higher education -- of both tenure track and sessionals -- is largely unionized. But, as discussed earlier, there is weakness structurally built into the sessionals’ collective position. This could be addressed by the full-timers. And this is exactly what I am proposing here. Full-timers could demand change to the contract faculty situation!

Full-timers could demand change to the hierarchical employment structure of Canadian higher education. By doing so – and by showing they were serious about it – they could not only work toward the achievement of justice for a grossly exploited group of colleagues but actually toward the preservation of quality higher education, as these two things are intimately related. My argument here could easily be misunderstood. It could be read as simply a call for full-time faculty to be more altruistic. Rather than altruism, however, what I am calling for could be more aptly described as enlightened self-interest.

There is a widespread impression that full-time faculty benefit from the exploitation of sessionals. This is a common belief among both full-time and contract faculty, rather more bitterly among the latter group. Each can easily perceive the glaring inequalities between their situations. Nonetheless, it is a mistake to believe that the exploitation by the institution of the one creates the privileges of the other. When sessional teaching was a rarity, the notion of it being an apprenticeship was to quite some degree a reality. Universities did not always depend upon a large casual labour force to fulfill their educational missions. The full-timers of the past were always in a pretty good

situation vis-à-vis working conditions, perks, security and salary. If anything their collective situation now has significantly deteriorated relative to other professions such as lawyers and medical doctors. The casualization of such a large percentage of the academic labour force has not actually benefited the full-timers; they gained no new benefits or privileges. In fact, sessional labour has been used in part to keep wages for full-timers down. Recognizing that fact, however, is only part of what I would consider necessary for full-timers to recognize their “enlightened self-interest”.

My argument is that the casualization of the labour force is the flagship policy, as it were, of the neoliberalization of higher education and that this process overall is destroying all the good qualities of the university. Full-time professors have both a vested interest and powerful emotive linkage with the maintenance of educational quality. At the same time as maintaining decent salaries, benefits and pensions they have felt the burden of increased class sizes and ever more onerous administrative duties. They have been witnessing the gradual decline of educational quality, and it has pained many of them to witness this. They are experientially aware of many of the negative aspects of the neoliberal university. What they need to put together in their minds (in their hearts and minds!) is the fact that these things come in a package. They need to grasp the fact that the miserable salaries and working conditions of the contract faculty are indirectly but nonetheless powerfully affecting their own working conditions and at some point in the near future are very likely going to profoundly affect their salaries as well!

Lest I be accused of being an idealistic dreamer, whether what I’m suggesting is seen as “enlightened self-interest,” or simply an altruistic concern for social justice, let me assert quickly that I do not believe what I am calling for is even remotely on the horizon. Management has succeeded very thoroughly in dividing us ideologically. A first step toward the kinds of action I am advocating though, would be for the union to engage in an educational campaign to convince tenured and tenure track faculty of the proposition that justice for our seriously exploited colleagues is essential to the preservation of quality higher education. To preserve the university, we must educate the educators!

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From Being an Entrepreneur to Being Entrepreneurial: The Consolidation of Neoliberalism in Ontario's Universities

*Eric Newstadt*¹

ABSTRACT: Extracurricular programs designed to provide Ontario's university students with an opportunity to explore and develop their entrepreneurial talents are now at every university in Ontario. Largely ignored by mainstream scholars, the significance of such extracurricular programs should not be under-estimated simply because they are not part of the regular curriculum in most programs. On the contrary, the new entrepreneurial programs mark the ascension of neoliberal notions of self-help and self-reliance to the very core of Ontario's universities. Tracking the development and evolution of neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, helps to illustrate how being an entrepreneur and being entrepreneurial are the by-products of very calculated efforts by Chicago School economists Milton Friedman, Arthur Director and others. Accounting for the agency of students is also critical to understanding the recent outgrowth of extracurricular entrepreneurial programs, just as it is to understanding the potential to press back against the neoliberal program.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurialism; Higher Education; Crowd Funding; Inequality

All too frequently, the degree to which students and faculty have been active agents in *making* and maintaining Ontario's system of higher education is either ignored or underestimated. And in so failing to either recognize or sufficiently emphasize the agency of students and faculty in making higher education in the province, scholars have often tended to also underestimate how rooted and extensive neoliberalism is, not just within the university but also, and perhaps more importantly, outside

¹ Eric Newstadt received his PhD from the Department of Political Science at York University. He currently teaches in the Department of Politics at Acadia University.

Ontario's universities too.² As such, the significance of any particular policy or program also tends to be misdiagnosed generally as little more than an indication of the fact that neoliberal discourses and policy frameworks have become hegemonic within Ontario's policymaking and university administrative circles. The parameters of neoliberalism are thereby made into a laundry list of policies, some more disciplinary and coercive than others, but none of which affect "everyday life" in ways that have transformed and which continue to transform our subjective self-understanding, not the least as scholars concerned with understanding the dynamics of higher education in Ontario.³

When open to and considerate of the agency of students and faculty in the remaking of higher education in Ontario, and, at the same time, to a similarly expansive understanding of neoliberalism, one where hegemonic policy paradigms are seen to have a life and a significance beyond either policymaking circles or disembodied notions of "globalization" and "austerity" and not any clear relation to everyday life. In this regard, the recent emergence of extra-curricular programs designed to encourage and support student entrepreneurialism in all of Ontario's

² Throughout, I define neoliberalism as a program of accumulation that emerged after 1980 in response to the crisis of the immediate post-war order. Under the aegis of key states and the US in particular, the neoliberal program of accumulation is premised upon the ability of investors to rapidly invest and divest into and out of different jurisdictions. Such investment decisions are based primarily, though by no means exclusively, on relative levels of labour market flexibility. Such flexibility is not understood as simply a measure of relative wage rates. Rather, labour market flexibility is better thought of as an ongoing approximation of capital's potential to accumulate profit in a particular jurisdiction given multiple considerations. The neoliberal era is also described by the ascent of neoclassical cum neo-liberal theory to a position of unrivalled and global hegemony. The 'neoliberal university' and 'neoliberalism in the university' is intended to describe the imposition and normalization of market or market-type signalling at multiple levels (i.e. prices or quasi-prices are attached to virtually all aspects of the university), and institutional functional preoccupation with the (re)production of flexible/quiescent labour and "monopolizable" (patentable/ownable) forms of knowledge. For a fuller description of neoliberalism and its development see (Harvey, 2005; Gindin and Panitch, 2012; Fast, 2013). For a fuller description of what is meant by the neoliberal university see Newstadt, 2013.

³ What I describe below as "mainstream" scholarship on Ontario's system of higher education is the product of a group of scholars whose work on the subject is most frequently cited and/or relied upon both in the extant literature and in public policy debates. Thinkers like Michael Skolnick, Glen Jones, Donald Fisher, David Trick, Knell Rubenson, Ian Clark, Theresa Shanahan, Paul Axelrod, and a handful of others have produced a wide body of literature. Their work is frequently referenced in government reports and has even been sponsored by government agencies with an eye to having them outline a policy program for the province to follow. Also, Skolnik, Jones, and Fisher have played key roles on various government agencies or advisory bodies at various points in their careers. Axelrod is the dean of education at York University in Toronto. Many of the above have also published together on the subject, and their work – and supervision – has had a clear impact of the extant literature, such that it is hardly a stretch to describe their work as comprising a kind of canon on Ontario's system of higher education. As I outline below, these scholars also tend to share a common ontological and epistemological framework.

universities is neither marginal to the operation of the university as a whole nor merely about teaching students “disentitlement”, as two critics recently suggested (Sears and Cairns 2014).⁴ Rather, the recent fascination with student entrepreneurialism is also demonstrative of students’ desire to learn what the proponents of such programs hope to teach: a more individuated and consumer-based form of *entitlement*, one that seeks to “free” the individual consumer from the fetters of – or potential for – collective action. In other words, the emergence of business incubators and crowd-funding programs in Ontario’s universities suggests that patterns of interaction and behaviour that neoliberal capitalism and neoliberal policies encourage are already well-established in and outside of those institutions. What this in turn means is that the new entrepreneurial programs, though extracurricular, will likely play an increasingly notable role in the further extension and consolidation of the facile instrumentalism (like notions of self-help and “free” competition) that describe neoliberal ideology. Thus, the new entrepreneurialism will work to undermine the potential for deep and critical analysis in Ontario’s universities and to further normalize the kinds of hyper-competitive conditions, managerial rationalities, and disciplinary capacities that all but force even the most critically minded scholars to somehow, and in some way, accommodate.

THE UBIQUITY AND AMBIGUITY OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM

That ostensibly isolated and extracurricular business incubator and crowd-funding programs have a significance that cannot be diagnosed when we focus on the fact that such programs are optional and extracurricular, as is the norm, is best illustrated by those who have championed such programs most aggressively. The remarkable ambiguity of the language used by government agencies and university administrators in discussing the new entrepreneurial programs makes it difficult to discern what the intended ambit of “entrepreneurial education” really is, or who Ontario’s “student entrepreneurs” really are. Just as quickly as entrepreneurs are described in terms that set them apart from the rest of the student population, so is one pushed to conceive of every student as a kind of entrepreneur. Though clearly also suggestive of some grander policy design, the ambiguity of the language also plays

⁴ For Sears and Cairns (2014) “teaching disentitlement” is done, “either openly in the curriculum (for example, through entrepreneurship education) or through the structure of the system (for example, through user pay, sharp tuition increases, and ever-expanding class sizes”.

on another significant, though far less commented on, manifestation of neoliberalism: the idea that students could be entrepreneurs, or even that entrepreneurialism could be learned. Before turning to this issue, it is helpful to briefly explore the ambiguity just described.

In a recent report by the body that represents all of Ontario's universities, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), entrepreneurship is described in terms that do little to help readers understand that the business incubators and crowd-funding programs explored therein, are in fact extra-curricular, optional, and not intended as mandated interventions into curricular design:

“Entrepreneurship, upon which economists say economic growth depends, has moved from the margins to the mainstream of university education. There are entire programs devoted to teaching students what it takes to invent the next big thing, attract investors and take their service or product to market...As a result, universities are now preparing students to create their own jobs, as well as jobs for other people. At the core, they are developing an innovation capacity in students that will enable them to be “intra-preneurs” – employees who behave like entrepreneurs within the context of a large organization. This is much more than an interesting campus trend. It is the key to success for many thousands of students. It is vital to the strength of the economy ... Many thousands of students a year are learning entrepreneurship in dozens of programs and hundreds of courses at Ontario's 21 publicly funded universities. This focus on innovation is reaping rewards, with hundreds of startup companies being created each year.” (COU, 2013, 1)

The Government of Ontario has also suggested that the proper purview of “entrepreneurial education” is rather broad. In a recent discussion paper intended to frame debate over higher education policy in the Province, the Government asks:

“The government is committed to providing new and dedicated support for Ontario's young entrepreneurs. How can the postsecondary education system contribute to this objective through experiential learning initiatives? What kinds of curricula, programs, or support are needed to increase the labour-market readiness and entrepreneurship capacity of students graduating from Ontario colleges and universities? What lessons can be learned from the apprenticeship

programs as we design new experiential learning opportunities for Ontario college and university students?" (MTCU 2012, 21)

In those instances where either/both the government and university administrators have indicated that entrepreneurial programming is/will continue to be circumscribed and not completely generalized, such is often discussed with reference to government sponsored efforts to ensure greater institutional "differentiation" between the province's eighteen publicly assisted universities. Apparently, by having some institutions focus on developing students' entrepreneurial talents, while others look to develop their research skills, the government's allegedly "arms-length" advisory body, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) claims that it intends to both provide on-going support for entrepreneurialism and sufficient institutional autonomy so as to ensure programmatic diversity (and academic freedom).⁵ But the discourse around "differentiation", which is how the government is described its efforts to direct institutional and programmatic focus/diversity, is also contaminated with references and allusions to the purported benefits of entrepreneurialism, so much so that one is again forced to wonder about the programmatic and curricular limits of "entrepreneurial learning":

"Differentiation promotes institutional quality and system competitiveness by enabling each postsecondary institution to grow preferentially in those areas where it already excels, or aspires to excel. Higher quality programs means that the credentials students receive upon graduation are more highly valued; this makes the students more competitive relative to those from other jurisdictions and makes Ontario universities more attractive to international students." (Weingarten and Deller, 2010, 17)

In other words, by imposing competitive pressures the government believes it can compel both students and our institutions to behave as would any wise entrepreneur, in a manner that would exploit and capitalize on their competitive advantages. Again, beyond the obvious fetishism for the alleged efficiency of markets, what is striking about such discursive constructions is the degree to which they are replete with references to entrepreneurialism. Such references are what distinguishes

⁵ With remarkable alacrity the HEQCO's recommendations have either anticipated or mirrored government policy. And the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), has even suggested that the HEQCO's research is perhaps less "objective" than is sometimes claimed by either the HEQCO or the Government.

the current discourse around entrepreneurialism in Ontario's system of higher education, as something other than a classically liberal articulation of the same idea. And this not only raises the spectre of neoliberalism, it also begs that we consider how and why such articulations have become more widely comprehensible, not least to students and faculty.

As it happens, the ubiquity of entrepreneurialism is a relatively recent phenomenon, one which follows hotly on the heels of a series of very deliberate and concerted attempts to both revise and extend neoclassical and neoliberal ideas. Indeed, the foundations of the "new", more inclusive and encompassing entrepreneurialism were laid over sixty years ago, when the fathers of contemporary neoliberalism set about trying to develop – with generous support from the Volcker Foundation – the theoretical and discursive basis for what they always conceived of as a political project. More specifically, between the 1940s and early 1950s three theoretical "innovations" facilitated and helped drive the ideational, ideological, and discursive extension of entrepreneurialism. First was Hayek's redefinition of the central problematic of economics, which posited markets as a kind of super-computer, massively more dynamic than mere human beings (Mirowski, 2011, 26). Second, was the neoliberal reconciliation with monopoly, which made market structure irrelevant, anti-trust legislation a fetter on competition, and neoclassical narratives about perfect competition and equilibrium central to public policy (van Horn, 2009). And third was the concomitant development of "entrepreneurship studies", which, during the 1950s, drew heavily from the Chicago School in making entrepreneurship less about business enterprise and more a kind of learned decision-making capacity useable in any and every context (Soltow, 1968; Blaug, 1995; Rocha, 2012). By the middle of the 1950s the theoretical stage was set: the market had been inscribed as central to the efficient allocation of scarce resources; the state was resurrected as an invaluable champion in that cause; every organization was subject to intense competition; and entrepreneurialism was effectively freed from the fetters of the corporation and turned into a generalizable set of skills that anyone and everyone could (and should) wisely learn.

When in the 1970s and 1980s neoliberal theory began its ascent to the hegemonic position it now enjoys, the scope of entrepreneurialism likewise expanded.⁶ Where entrepreneurialism was once exclusively

⁶ As Fine and and Milonakis (2009, 62) describe, the key turning point came after the US Federal Reserve's failed attempt to limit the growth of the money supply based on Friedman's understanding of inflation.

defined in relation to a class of individuals who possessed a high tolerance for risk and a skill-set associated with the management and operation of a private-sector business, it came to also refer more generally to an individual's learned ability to self-help, tolerate risk, and adapt to fluid and hyper competitive conditions. Again, not only was this transition and expansion hardly noticed, at least in terms of the theoretical manipulations just outlined, it was also assiduously prosecuted by the likes of Friedman, Director, and a host of other like-minded members of the Mont Pelerin Society (van Horn, 2009; Fine and Milonakis, 2009).

By the end of the 1980s, the extension of entrepreneurialism was increasingly normalized. David Harvey (1989), for example, highlighted what he describes as the turn from "managerialism to entrepreneurialism" as critical to the transformation of urban spaces in the 1980s. More germane to the current subject, Slaughter and Leslie (1997), as well as Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) usefully discussed the development of the "entrepreneurial university" in American higher education, also after 1980. For them, the press towards entrepreneurialism in the emergent neoliberal university was evidenced, first and foremost by a series of juridical changes that were intended to incentivize particular forms of research and behaviour, specifically those that had an entrepreneurial bent. In the US, a suite of legislation including, but not limited to, Bayh-Dole (1980), made it possible for the results of publicly-subsidized research to be held privately (i.e., licensed or sold to the highest bidder). Following this, jurisdictions throughout the world rapidly followed suit, or, where legislation was not required, simply became more permissive with respect to the privatization of publicly-funded research. Thus faculty the world over were encouraged to explore and develop their entrepreneurial talents. States also began to encourage university-based scientists to commercialize the results of their research by setting new funding guidelines and priorities. As in many other jurisdictions, Canada and Ontario were quick to move, albeit somewhat less aggressively than was the case in places like the UK, New Zealand, and Australia. In 1997, Canada's federal government founded the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), a CDN\$ 9 billion concern that is focused on financing the capital costs related to conducting commercially oriented and university-based research (Polster, 2007). Of course, such moves by the federal government came a decade-and-a-half after Ontario's universities, through the COU, first suggested that the government link research funding to commercial priorities (Trick, 2005). And the

formation of the CFI also came a decade and a half after the provincial government announced the Ontario Centres for Excellence program, which has since been the hallmark of neoliberal science policy in the province. And this policy drift has hardly stalled since then, as has been elucidated by scholars of various stripes (Fisher, Atkinson-Grosjean, and House, 2001; Fisher et al., 2009; Newson and Buchbinder, 1988; Newson, 1998; Coleman and Kamboureli, 2011).

ENTREPRENEURIALISM NORMALIZED

The fact that the roll-out of policy, backstopped as it has been by a theoretically transfigured liberalism and a politically minded juggernaut, has helped to normalize and universalize entrepreneurialism, is of course, only half of the story. The other half has to do with the various ways in which such policies have been reinforced by both other system and institutional-level changes (in Ontario and around the world) as well as by social forces that hardly reside within the policymaking domain, conventionally defined. For instance, the bid to publish and avoid perishing has almost certainly helped to transform conventions of collegial self-governance and thereby to empower an ever larger class of professional managers inside Ontario's universities. The time required to prepare publication makes it necessary for faculty to forgo involvement in the management of their institutions, a role they therefore have ceded to managers.⁷ The "interstitial organizations" with which both Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), were concerned in their analyses of academic capitalism and the entrepreneurial university in the US, things like tech transfer offices⁸, also became increasingly visible – and powerful – components of every university in

⁷ The "publish or perish" orthodoxy and its arrival in Ontario is hard to date precisely. This is because that orthodoxy is reinforced by a multitude of policies operating and practices at different levels of the university and also because it is reinforced by the way in which the pressure to publish plays-out in other jurisdictions - Ontario's universities compete internationally for standing, status, market-share in the lucrative market for foreign students, as well as private-sector funding. Also, tight and hyper-competitive job markets in other jurisdictions are forcing newly minted PhDs to compete on a world-scale. Ontario's universities' increased reliance on contract and contingent faculty, itself a by-product of fiscal tightness since the late 1970s, has certainly increased the pressure to be productive (Rajagopal, 2002). The increasingly heated competition for funding from the three federal granting agencies has also long played a role (Polster, 2007; Polster, 2003). The progressive imposition of productivity measures, which began with unregulated, but nonetheless significantly regulative, ranking exercises in the early 1990s has also intensified the issue immensely, as has the recent advent of performance-based pay at some of Ontario's universities (Newstadt, 2013).

⁸ Since the mid-1990s, all of Ontario's universities have developed either tech-transfer offices, offices of research and innovation, or similar institutional bodies designed to develop greater links between the private-sector and the university.

Ontario, not least because a large and growing segment of the faculty have come to require and demand the assistance and support that such offices provide.⁹

Insofar as a core segment of the faculty has been insulated from many of the pressures and changes just mentioned, they have, nonetheless, also been forced to prove their utility by being entrepreneurial. Programs need to ensure enrolment targets are met; faculty need to demonstrate a certain level of productivity in terms of things like grant dollars earned or measures of bibliometric impact (Grant, 1998; Handford, 2002).¹⁰ Thus, regardless of whether or not academic work is commercially-oriented or even steadfastly opposed to “academic capitalism”, it is necessarily caught-up in a process of commodity production. The ideological and ideational consequences of such behaviour are difficult to overstate. The need to publish, to compete for funding, or to improve one’s bibliometric ranking, propels scholars to undertake forms of inquiry that can quickly yield publishable results: quantitatively oriented, model-based, and/or circumscribed, discrete, and ideologically narrow exercises that are precisely the forms of thought that are now hegemonic within the contemporary university. Of course, the pressure faced by full-time and tenured academics are amplified for academics whose employment is temporary and contingent. Though there are some very recent indications that contingent faculty are mobilizing in opposition, most contingent faculty are still forced to comply and attempt to eke out an existence by shoring-up the proverbial boat: publish feverishly and reward students with high grades in the hope that they may, in turn, reward them with good student evaluation of teaching questionnaire scores. And for the army of postdoctoral researchers upon which Ontario’s research-intensive institutions depend, the pressure to commercialize

⁹ As I have argued elsewhere, the pace of neoliberal transformation in Ontario was certainly slower than it was in other jurisdictions. This is so for several reasons, including the relatively militant and active nature of organized labour in Ontario right-up until the early 1990s. In the 1970s and early 1980s, faculty in Ontario’s universities, also waged a vigorous effort to press-back against the ascendant neoliberal tide as the spate of faculty unionizations in the province during that period is testament (Newstadt, 2013). But that process stalled in the mid-1980s, when faculty at the University of Toronto balked at the idea of unionization in part because the government and the COU embraced the idea of market-based, rather than government-directed, institutional reform. Apparently, a sufficient number of faculty at the University of Toronto saw in such reform the potential for terrific advantage, given the University’s position as the largest and most research-intensive institution in the country (Newstadt, 2013, 384).

¹⁰ Aside from the fact that faculty at several universities in Ontario have been subjected to performance-based pay, there is a growing number of examples, albeit outside of Ontario and Canada, where contracts around tenure have simply been broken (Pitchford, 2012; Willmott, 1995; Willmott, 2003).

and be entrepreneurial is intense and outlined as an embedded and inescapable “fact” of university-based research (Holloway, 2014). The recent, and largely successful, efforts of postdoctoral researchers to unionize in Ontario (and across Canada), has often been inspired by the apparent need for postdoctoral researchers to protect their stake in the intellectual property they participate in developing.¹¹

Similarly, students have responded to government- and university administration-led efforts to turn students into customers by thoroughly embracing that ideology.¹² Increasingly, students are concerned to ensure that they get their money’s worth, not so much by dedicating themselves to the pursuit of higher learning, but rather to the pursuit of high-grades, irrespective of the quality of the work they submit. Unquestionably, this attitude has been fostered and fomented by the imposition of ever-higher tuition-fees and the frequently repeated dictum that a university education is best viewed as a kind of investment vehicle.¹³ Nonetheless, students do increasingly conceive of themselves in terms that hardly change when they leave the local mall and head to Ontario’s institutions of higher learning. In fact, at Ryerson University it is not even necessary to leave the local mall in order to get to the university. Even where campuses are more easily distinguished from retail outlets, they often house malls and are increasingly replete with the very same kinds of advertising and branding campaigns that one encounters in retail contexts. Much of the advertising and branding that students encounter is put out by their universities, which have become aggressive advertisers with carefully crafted branding campaigns of their own.

Students’ desire to obtain the most marketable degree is also understandable as a by-product of ongoing economic malaise and

¹¹ I was recently involved in an organizing drive for postdocs at Dalhousie University. Not only did we draw heavily from similar such drives in Ontario and draw from peoples’ experiences in that Province, but postdocs at Dalhousie also identified the protection of their intellectual property as one of the most important reasons why they felt the need to unionize.

¹² The “student-as-consumer” model and its ubiquity in Ontario’s universities is evidenced in a multitude of ways. First, tuition-fees have increased dramatically, as have levels of student-debt and consumer-debt held by both students and their families. The final report of the Rae Review, like several other such reports through the 1980s and 1990s consistently use the language of investment and the private-returns to investment in education as a means by which to encourage students to conceive of themselves as investors/customers.

¹³ Bob Rae, among others, has been one of the most notable champions of the idea that a university education is a kind of investment vehicle, one whose benefits accrue to the individual. See the final report of the so-called “Rae Review”, the 2005 government appointed committee investigating the state of higher education in Ontario, to which Rae was appointed the Chair (Rae 2005).

historically high levels of youth unemployment. In such a context, students are understandably wont to forgo the apparent risks of an “impractical” education when it comes to things like program and course selection or the demands that they make of their professors for “useful” knowledge that can be easily applied in the pursuit of employment and security. Either way, students increasingly demand that all of their courses take on an applied or practical bent. The aforementioned Ryerson University, a one-time polytechnic long described as “Rye-High” because of its ongoing focus on applied programming, has seen the largest net increase of applications by high-school seniors, something that the University’s current President attributes to, “our message of innovation, entrepreneurship and connection to community” (Ryerson University, 2012). Of course, as Readings (1996) pointed out in his excellent excursions on the university (he discussed Canada’s institutions most closely) and the discourse of “excellence”, the stranglehold of ranking and measurement, and, it might be added, of entrepreneurialism and commercialization, is such that the content of a course no longer matters very much; in breaking the university into so many discrete and measurable bits, the utility of which are only ever a by-product of market valuation, students’ intellectual curiosity is undermined and made alien and unrecognizable, except perhaps as its own kind of commodity. It is perhaps useful to recall that student evaluation of teaching (SETs) were, in an all too ironic twist of capitalist fate, dreamed-up by students as a means by which to force their teachers to assign the kinds of radical texts, like Marx’s *Capital*, (not Piketty’s), which were once hard to find in American universities, as they have arguably become again, albeit with a decidedly less vocal an opposition (Gray and Bergmann, 2003).

The mutually reinforcing bottom-up and top-down march towards applied and instrumental forms of knowledge just described is also having an impact on the nature and disciplinary background of the faculty in Ontario’s universities. As new programs and strategic directions are chosen less for their academic excellence than for the degree to which they provide new streams of potential revenue, new links to emerging private-sector players, as well as potential reputational gains (Dill, 2003; Hazelkorn, 2007; Readings, 1996), Ontario’s universities are shifting their programmatic foci. According to data from the COU’s new Council of Quality Assurance, of the 146 programs approved since September of 2011, fully 107 are of an

obviously-applied nature.¹⁴ Where faculty in those quarters of the university still bent on teaching radical ideas have not already been forced to adapt, as was outlined above, they are nonetheless rapidly becoming outnumbered by those whose concerns and ambitions jibe more fully with students/customers, university administrators and government bureaucrats.

Insofar as the scope of entrepreneurialism in the university stretches beyond that of any particular program or curricula, it also stretches beyond the university as well. As I suggested above, the emergence of the neoliberal university, and within it of “entrepreneurialism” coincided with (and was partly a response to) an emergent orthodoxy concerning the state’s appropriate role in the political economy. Just as critical, however, was the reemergence of global finance in a renewed and transformed program of capitalist accumulation. What is germane about this is the fact that the rebirth of global finance in the 1970s and 1980s involved incredible innovation and extension such that every aspect of daily life was/is measured and subsumed within global flows of capital (Langley, 2008; LeBaron, 2010; Lapavitsas, 2011; Krippner, 2005; Gindin and Panitch, 2012). The university – and those within it - has hardly been insulated either from such transformations or from the avowedly political calculations of those that authored them. Thus, the spread of entrepreneurialism throughout the whole university has been “over-determined”, and that over-determination is itself evidence of a new “common sense”, a new neoliberal subjectivity to which no one is entirely immune. As is discussed immediately, the proverbial “facts on the ground” place the promises and realities of neoliberalism in sharp relief. And while this relief makes it all the more tempting to dispense with the issue of agency, we should not be so easily seduced, for the reproduction of neoliberalism is nonetheless affected by so many acts of commission at all socio-economic and political levels of our society.

NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS: (NOT)FACING THE FACTS

It is, of course, hardly coincidental that the new entrepreneurialism is deeply embedded and at absolute odds with the realities that most students are likely to face when they graduate. Simply put, the idea that students-cum-entrepreneurs will act as any kind of impetus for durable

¹⁴ This calculation is based on my own review of the information published on the Quality Council’s website at: <http://oucqa.ca/program-approvals-menu/program-approvals/>

forms of economic growth, which is frequently presented as the reason why Ontario's universities have had to develop and expand their business incubator and crowd-funding programs, is not credible given the facts. According to Statistics Canada, in 2012, most workers in Ontario were employed by firms employing over 300 people. Moreover, firms employing over 500 people, which Statistics Canada counts as "large" firms, employed roughly 90 percent of that majority. Firms with fewer than five employees, which is the size of most start-up firms, have never made-up much more than 6 percent of total employment in Ontario. In fact, between 2001 and 2014, small- and medium-sized employers (SMEs) of all sizes have accounted for a decreasing proportion of total employment. While it is perhaps true that SMEs have generated relatively more job growth than have large firms, between 2001 and 2012 they also generated about the same amount of job destruction. In other words, SMEs have tended to shrink and go out of business far more frequently than their larger counterparts.¹⁵ Seventeen years ago, in 1997, researchers at Statistics Canada recognized these facts, and detailed some of the risks associated with employment in SMEs. There is no reason to believe that any of these facts have changed, particularly given the stagnancy of Ontario's economy. Although the overall tone of the Statistics Canada report nonetheless champions the cause of entrepreneurialism in Canada in notes that,

"People working at small- and medium-sized firms are especially susceptible [to unemployment and insecurity]. While small businesses have accounted for a disproportionately high share of employment growth over the past decade (Picot, Baldwin, and Dupuy, 1994), they are more prone to failure. Young firms are also more at risk: over half the new firms that fail in the first ten years of life fail within the first two years of operation." (Statistics Canada, 1997, 11)

And not only are workers at small firms more susceptible to business failure when they wind up working for SMEs, they are also susceptible to lower incomes: between 2001 and 2012, workers at start-ups earned, on average, 17.2 percent less than did workers at large firms. Small firms also tend to offer fewer benefits and do not provide workers with access to either defined benefit or defined contribution pensions with nearly the same frequency as do large employers. And we also know that dollar-for-dollar, larger, multi-employer pensions are significantly more stable,

¹⁵ All data is from Statistics Canada, CANSIM database. CANSIM TABLE 2810041

provide workers with a better return on their investment, and thereby ultimately add to the health of the economy than do single employer or matched contribution pensions (Arthurs, 2008).

These patterns are unlikely to change any time soon. This is because growing inequality and stagnating wages pose real challenges to the ability of most Canadians to continue to consume at current levels, let alone invest in the next “big thing”. Also, the reluctance on the part of corporate Canada to start investing what are now unprecedentedly large stockpiles of cash is also exacerbating the problem of youth unemployment (Isfeld, 2014). The unwillingness of those same corporations – as well as the federal and provincial government – to relent on wages and permit even mild inflation likely add further fuel to the unemployment fire. At any rate, the point is that absent the sudden and massive expansion of available seed capital, it is unlikely that many more start-ups than currently get funded will be able to swing into business let alone succeed; even the status-quo for start-ups will be difficult to maintain. And finally, the relationship between SMEs and large firms is such that the success of many SMEs is utterly dependent on the performance of large firms.

One indication that both the government and Ontario’s universities understand how wide is the chasm between the promise of the new entrepreneurialism and the realities of the market, is the recently outlined assertion that “entrepreneurship” programs will teach students to become “intra-preneurs”, that is, “employees who behave like entrepreneurs *within the context of a large organization*” (emphasis added) (COU, 2013). In so describing the hoped-for impact of entrepreneurial learning, the universities are not only offering a far more realistic assessment of graduates’ life-chances, they are also helping to shed some light on what the new entrepreneurialism is, in part, really about the acculturation to a particular way of life. This point is central to Sears and Cairns’ (2014) recent analysis of the new entrepreneurialism as a policy program designed, on the one hand, to “teach disentanglement” and, on the other hand, open room to manoeuvre Ontario’s universities into a more clearly hierarchical, “differentiated” and class-based “family” of institutions. The problem with their analysis lies not so much in terms of what Sears and Cairns describe as the intent of the new entrepreneurialism, but rather in what this assessment seems to imply, namely that disentanglement is being taught anew and has not already been thoroughly assimilated by the great majority of students in Ontario’s universities. This assessment is perhaps reasonably made, given the design and intent of their article, students’ life chances, and the COU’s rather

revealing deployment of ‘intra-praneurialism’.¹⁶ However, the perhaps unintended implication of their analysis, namely that students are only being taught disentanglement because of top-down influences, and not actively demanding the same, is a conclusion that should be avoided.

This is so for several reasons, all of which stem from the analysis provided above. First and foremost, there is absolutely no indication that students are objecting to the neoliberal orthodoxy, either as would-be entrepreneurs or intra-praneurs. To be sure, groups like the Canadian Federation of Students have consistently and laudably pushed for a complete overhaul of funding for higher education and research. However, the absence of a vigorous labour movement willing and able to champion the cause of public investment and national ownership means that calls for low or no tuition-fees, or the removal of conditional ear-marks for research funding amount to little more than a kind of reform-liberal “level playing field” type of argument. Whether students are to be entrepreneurs or intra-praneurs, the oppositional scope that the students’ movement enjoys is incredibly restricted. There is also good reason to suspect that students are increasingly less able to cogently question the logic behind either the new entrepreneurialism or neoliberalism in general. Aside from a slate of anecdotal evidence regarding writing quality and critical thinking ability (Smith, 2000), data from now three OECD and Statistics Canada sponsored international adult literacy tests suggests that the majority of university graduates are only literate enough to read and follow directions (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2011; OECD and Statistics Canada, 1995; OECD, 2013). And again, the neoliberalization of higher education, in Ontario as elsewhere, has also involved a sizeable shift in terms of both the normative position occupied by a large chunk of the professoriate, and the epistemological and ontological foundations upon which their academic practices are built.

The idea that government policy merely continues to “teach” disentanglement is also best avoided because it is reproductive of several far more problematic tropes and tendencies within the “mainstream” literature on higher education in Ontario. Unlike Sears and Cairns, mainstream analyses of higher education in Ontario are rooted in what can best be described as a kind of left institutionalism. In this frame, the neoliberal “drift” of higher education policy is generally explained as

¹⁶ It should be pointed out that the article in question is not – and was clearly not intended as – a scholarly work. Their article appeared in a popular and politically oriented magazine, and was clearly meant to describe government policy and the kind of oppositional organizing that is required to press-back against such policy. The article does not seek to problematize or understand agency, so much as it seeks to mobilize.

a by-product of decision-making at the upper echelons of government bureaucracies and university administrations. Without ever denying the social, political, and economic impacts of neoliberal policy in and around Ontario's universities, or the reproductive and redistributive impacts of neoliberalism outside of the university, little attempt is ever made to understand power in a manner that would make visible the kinds of issues raised above. In fact, though rife with references to "academic capitalism", most analyses of Ontario's system of higher education tend to see government policy as having had a decidedly uneven impact on the university, often in a kind of zero-sum manner. Accordingly, some departments are heavily impacted, while others are left largely untouched. David Trick (2005), for example, diagnoses a "paradigm shift" around university-based research and research-funding, but not with respect to programs taught.¹⁷ As such, neoliberal policy appears within the mainstream literature as that which is only ever threatening to takeover and transform apparently "far from the market fields." (Fisher, Atkinson-Grosjean, and House, 2001; Axelrod, 2008; Fisher et al., 2009; Clark, 2009; Trick, 2005).

This analytical frame is not particularly new to the study of higher education in Ontario. For the most part it is built on epistemological and ontological foundations that favour clearly institutionalized and obviously proximate lines of causation. For example, the commonly held belief that Ontario's universities enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and independence is generally gleaned from studies of Ontario's system that have emphasized the fact that Ontario's universities have consistently been allowed to self-regulate, generally in response to threatened intervention (Jones, 2004; Trick, 2005; Royce, 1998). Even in instances where the universities' self-regulatory response to threatened intervention operates according to the same logic and set of priorities as would have government imposed programs, as was arguably the case with quality assessment, the mainstream literature interprets such as an example of neoliberal policy being kept at bay.¹⁸ In other words, absent the imposition of neoliberal policy and clear new regulatory practices/programs that effect and substantively change the nature of academic work, what happens in Ontario's universities is not "neoliberal". In this

¹⁷ In his above referenced doctoral dissertation, David Trick (Trick, 2005) sees the emergence of conditional forms of research funding tied to commercialization as evidence of an emerged "paradigm", but one that he does not see as in any way dominant.

¹⁸ Apparently because the universities can control and amend quality assessment processes, and, most importantly, maintain systems of peer review, institutional autonomy and academic freedom is (re)secured (Gesink-Walsh, 2007; Jones, 1991; Jones, 2004).

way, the university, or the day-to-day rhythms and practices therein, is ascribed an ontological status outside and apart from the political economy (or “politics”, “society”, “the market”). More than this, the university and those within it are held to be almost inert and plastic receptors whose transformation and reconfiguration happens episodically and infrequently.

Though these assertions map into a hierarchical ordering of causation, there is no way to subject that ordering to critique. On the contrary, key or primary “causative variables”, like the neoliberal orientation of policy, are simply asserted as such without any sustained or coherent way to assess whether policy should be analytically privileged or viewed alongside other such ‘causative variables’. It is also not possible within this analytic frame to understand how policy is ontologically different and more important than, for example, students’ level of indebtedness or professors’ pre-occupation with publication counts, when it comes to explaining either the presence or absence of direct governmental intervention. As a result, most analyses of Ontario’s system of higher education fail to pick-up on or understand: 1) the impact had by neoliberal policy on all areas of the university; 2) the links between and impact of the development and evolution of neoliberal capitalism and the transformation of both public policy and the whole university; and, 3) the reasons why a simple “regulatory fix” are not likely to either resuscitate or preserve the capacity for critical thought within Ontario’s universities.¹⁹ This is perhaps why mainstream scholarship on higher education in Ontario has all but ignored the emergence of new business incubators and crowd funding programs; though arguably exemplary of neoliberal drift, such programs are viewed as relatively insignificant manifestations of such given their status as extracurricular programs.

TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL HOLISM

In recognizing the manner in which the domain of entrepreneurialism has shifted we are better able to recognize and make plain the degree to which the new entrepreneurialism, as well as the surrounding discourse, are remarkable, and in some ways quite subtle, obfuscations that work much as they are intended to work: they aid in the reproduction of

¹⁹ Whether or not the COU maintains control of the province’s quality assessment program, it will still operate to rationalize the system along neoliberal lines, and even if some provision is made to ensure the maintenance of adequate levels of funding for all programs so as to avoid pedagogical convergence, that convergence will still continue to take place.

neoliberal capitalism. Also, by connecting broader shifts in the political economy with the development and evolution of students' and faculty members', and administrators' subjectivities, we see agency in a new light and, simultaneously, open new avenues for the progressive reform of the university. We are also better positioned to understand why practitioners in the mainstream may be less willing or able to see agency where it exists, and to thereby locate and understand power dynamically instead of as something that has ossified in particular parts of particular institutions or institutional arrangements.

Generally speaking, Marxian and some post-structural analyses of higher education, in and outside of Ontario, have proven much more adept at documenting and describing the extensive nature of neoliberalism than have their institutionalist counterparts. Indeed, critical analysts have usefully outlined the way in which the redirection of funding is not just ghettoizing so-called "basic" or "frontier" research, but also, and at the same time, normalizing the pursuit of commercially oriented research, such that the further instantiation of neoliberal policy often comes at the behest of academics themselves and not just as a by-product of either governmental or administrative efforts to grow the amount of commercially oriented research undertaken in Ontario's institutions (Polster, 2007). Similarly, Sears (2003) has also outlined the way in which higher education has been "retooled" with the aim of "producing" students that are better able to fit within, and thereby reproduce, contemporary, neoliberal capitalism. And Newson and Buchbinder (1988), famously detailed the manner in which faculty have oftentimes demanded neoliberal reform, as much as they have organized against it. But even here, there remains something of a gap in the literature, not least as concerns the significance of the new entrepreneurialism, which has not received very much attention at all. The gap in question has to do with the failure to fully account for the scope of both neoliberalism and the accordant neoliberalization of higher education, which even radical scholars have tended to describe in terms that seek to preserve concepts of agency less by outlining the ways in which students and faculty have worked to produce neoliberalism and the neoliberal university, than by seeking to accentuate the cracks, fissures, and contradictions of those processes. By focussing, as Sears and Cairns do, on the vicious malevolence of government and university administrative policy and the importance of a "decolonized" curriculum, they arguably pull us away from a longer, far more disconcerting, look in the mirror and the myriad ways in which even oppositional activities can

help to reproduce the very malevolence to which we object.²⁰ Students and a huge swathe of the professoriate have internalized the lessons of disentanglement that neoliberalism – operating both in and outside of Ontario’s universities - has had to teach, so much so that a large component of both groups now feels entitled to learn disentanglement, by which I mean the skills and aptitudes necessary for self-help and increasingly competitive labour markets. The new entrepreneurial programs are thus additive to and reinforcing of the entrepreneurial self-understanding that has been consistently encouraged in the neoliberal university since the early 1980s.

As a result, the new entrepreneurial programs will operate as “poles of adjustment” around which every other taught program will be forced to articulate; to compete for students and funding, every program taught will be pushed and prodded to root students in methodological approaches to art, or geography, or political science, or anthropology, or whatever, that can be used instrumentally by students when they inevitably look to pull up their boot-straps and make entrepreneurial hay. Thus, to the extent that previous rounds of restructuring have not completely evacuated critical thought and potential from the contemporary university, the most recent incarnations of “entrepreneurialism” promise to do just that: annihilate the limited space that remains for meaningful forms of pluralism.

Of course, the terrain of neoliberalism, like that of the neoliberal university, is hardly even or seamless. Perhaps the most pressing contradiction with which neoliberalism and the neoliberal university will have to reckon has to do with the inability of neoliberal ideology to speak to, and explain, peoples’ lived realities. High rates of unemployment, particularly amongst youth, alongside ever-higher levels of consumer and student debt, all in the context of growing inequality will likely pose

²⁰ Sears and Cairns are entirely correct when they highlight the fact that the new entrepreneurialism is a significant force behind the pressure to differentiate. Sears and Cairns are also right insofar as mainstream thinkers are wont to read any symptoms of decay and crisis when diagnosed in relation to Ontario’s system of higher education as having less to do with the emergence of the neoliberal university than with efforts to contain it. Indeed, within mainstream circles, the problems that are affecting Ontario’s eighteen publicly assisted universities are seen to be a by-product, if anything, of the government’s unwillingness and inability to support the further marketization of Ontario’s universities. Indeed, by enabling the universities to maintain operating revenues without concomitant demands that courses properly prepare students for life after graduation, the government is alleged to have fuelled expansion in ways that have created programmatic duplication and an overriding sense of entitlement. This form of analysis generally yields a diagnosis that highlights the need for market-based or market-type reform, albeit in a manner that is cast as a humane and “realistic” response to the present situation (see for example, Weingarten and Deller, 2010).

a serious challenge to the hegemony of entrepreneurialism. But still, the need for peoples' frustration and anger to be mobilized and directed is inescapable. In this regard, the trajectory promised via the pursuit of entrepreneurial learning and institutional differentiation will possibly prove to be fecund ground for organizing in Ontario. Already, higher education is the most unionized sector of the Canadian political economy. While the government's program of institutional differentiation will not change that, it is likely to create a new set of internal divisions, for instance between teaching-stream and tenure-stream faculty, as well as between faculty at teaching-intensive and "full-service" institutions.

While such divisions may internally fracture some unions, they may also lead some faculty to feel stronger allegiances to part-time and contingent faculty, to teaching and research assistants, to students groups, and to other public-sector unions, where austerity has involved persistent attacks. In other words, where the "precariate" in the academy have, to date, not been able to foment particularly strong connections to tenure-stream and tenured academics, they may well discover strong allies in the precariate working outside the academy, in organized labour more generally, and among those faculty, contingent or not, who are converted to – and ghettoized in – teaching stream positions. In this the new entrepreneurial programs and the drive to differentiate Ontario's institutions via market-type mechanisms and incentives, may be sowing the seeds of transformation in a manner entirely befitting the so-called "knowledge-based economy". In looking to intensify the exploitation of those workers whose work is to produce "knowledge workers" that are less likely to object to the intensification of exploitation, the government may well create the conditions for "knowledge workers" throughout the services based economy to organize and object.

Then again, the alternative possibility seems now just as likely. Given the remarkably compromised position of organized labour and the relative quiescence of students in Ontario in the face of a stagnant economy and high youth unemployment, it would seem that students have already come to understand that their fates lie not collectively, but as individual businesses. It may well be that the new entrepreneurial programs help to consolidate and reproduce an ideology that will be linked to a still more flexible labour force than the province now enjoys. Again, it is important that we recognize how efficient the university has already proven to be in the "production of ignorance", and thereby in producing the conditions that complicate the organization of an opposition. Of course, if students do come to challenge the neoliberal

university, it will likely not be as a result of what happens within that institution, but rather because durable links are built between students and a revived labour movement. Though hardly a reason to hold out significantly more hope, it does, at a minimum, mean that the potential for the progressive transformation of Ontario's universities does not reside exclusively within them, but may also be ignited by progressive change in the larger political economy. In other words, hope rests in the multitude.

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The OSSTF Anti-Bill 115 Campaign: An Assessment from a Social Movement Unionism Perspective

Caitlin Hewitt-White¹

ABSTRACT: In the past decade, social movement unionism (SMU), also referred to as social justice unionism, has garnered a lot of attention from labour activists and scholars. The recent experience of the Chicago Teachers' union has especially invigorated this conversation. The CTU made unprecedented gains in mobilizing with parents in the campaign to tie an imposed extended school day to increased resources and staffing, and in the campaign against school closures. This paper aims to contribute to this conversation by highlighting how two key aspects of SMU - member control and non-economistic goals shared with the public - offer powerful possibilities for resisting neoliberal attacks on education workers. To this end, I reconstruct and assess the 2012 campaign of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) against the Ontario government's anti-labour Bill 115, with an eye to member involvement and the union's relationship to the public. OSSTF's top-down concessionary approach is at odds with union committees, policies, and autonomous rank-and-file activities that are oriented towards social justice and anti-neoliberalism. To strengthen the social-justice oriented currents within OSSTF, leaders and members would need to reconsider its internal democratic structures and how it builds coalitions with groups outside of the union.

KEYWORDS: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Education, Neoliberalism, Social Movement Unionism

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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, social movement unionism (SMU), also referred to as social justice unionism, has garnered a lot of attention from labour activists and scholars (Camfield, 2007; Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008; Gall, 2009; Fletcher, 2011; Ross, 2012; Ross & Savage, 2012; Weiner, 2012). The recent experience of the Chicago Teachers' union has especially invigorated this conversation. The CTU made unprecedented gains in mobilizing with parents in the campaign to tie an imposed extended school day to increased resources and staffing, with the campaign against school closures (Moran, 2012; Uetracht, 2012). This paper aims to contribute to this conversation by highlighting how two key aspects of SMU – member control and non-economistic goals shared with the public – offer powerful possibilities for resisting neoliberal attacks on education workers.

To this end, I reconstruct and assess the 2012 campaign of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) against the Ontario government's anti-labour Bill 115, with an eye to the role of members, parents, and a social justice agenda in the fight-back strategy. The union's eventual concessions, and its confusing strike strategy, compromised both member morale and public perception of OSSTF's sincerity as a union that fights for the common good. This paper offers a sketch of neoliberalism in Ontario's education system, an overview of social movement unionism, a brief reconstruction of Bill 115 and OSSTF's response to it. I also look at examples of OSSTF member dissent and the problems with internal democratic practice at their root. This dissent, in my view, indicates that members want OSSTF to embrace deeper member engagement: a hallmark of social movement unionism. I will refer to cases of unions that have developed deeper member engagement in tandem with deeper public engagement, in the process of reframing union struggles around the shared interest of preserving public education.

OSSTF provincial leadership's approach to resisting Bill 115 was centred on an understanding of OSSTF members as passive recipients of knowledge and strategy crafted by the leadership. The internal democratic structure of OSSTF theoretically allows for member engagement from the bottom up, but in practice, leaders have low expectations of members' willingness to mobilize. In its campaign against Bill 115, OSSTF consistently opted for business-union tactics, leaving member knowledge and power untapped. This resulted in important moments of dissonance between members and leaders. Furthermore, the anti-Bill

115 campaign did not incorporate education workers' relationships with students and the public. While it would be remiss to conclude that better member involvement and public buy-in would have necessarily resulted in a better contract, unions that have built both types of involvement have enjoyed gains in contracts and in popular support.

While this paper highlights deficiencies in OSSTF's 2012-2013 strategy and identifies business union practices that blocked full member engagement, OSSTF's structures and practices cannot be accurately reduced to a simplistic model: either one of social justice movement unionism or of Gompersian business unionism. As a province-wide organization covering thirty-five geographical districts and one hundred and forty bargaining units – each with its own local executive, school delegates, and committees of member activists – the degrees of local member involvement, public involvement, and social justice activism are diverse. Organizational documents can provide a picture of the institution “in theory”, but say little of what unfolds on the ground locally. The present study offers a glimpse at practice through texts produced by dissenting members, in the hopes that these marginal voices can shed light on grassroots experience.

Within union committees and in OSSTF policy, there exist a range of progressive positions on access to quality education for students affected by class, race, gender, and sexual inequality; inequalities which have been taken up, exacerbated, and rearticulated by neoliberalism.² I consider such positions to be in the interest of social justice, as they attempt to repair social inequality. Furthermore, OSSTF has policy statements against neoliberal educational practices like privatization and standardized testing.³ But these commitments to social justice and against neoliberalism were not evident when the union had the opportunity to respond to neoliberalism in the form of Bill 115. In other words, OSSTF's response insufficiently drew on the organization's pre-existing social justice values.

² Particularly noteworthy are the following OSSTF policies: policy 8.9.4.5 opposes the streaming of “working class and immigrant students” into “lower levels of academic instruction”; a number of policies under “Aboriginal Education” (8.21) asserts the need for Aboriginal knowledge to be incorporated throughout the curriculum; 8.15, “Anti-racism and anti-discrimination”, has a number of policies aimed at protecting students and OSSTF members from discrimination, including discrimination based on gender expression; and 12.14 states that OSSTF is opposed to all forms of racial profiling (OSSTF 2013a).

³ OSSTF's policy 11.8.1 is in favour of abolishing the Ministry of Education office that administers Ontario's standardized tests (OSSTF 2013a, 27) and policy 2.1.6 states that standardized tests should not be used to evaluate teachers. Furthermore, no less than thirteen policies under section 8.2 state that the OSSTF is opposed to privatization, outsourcing, and commercialization in the education sector, in addition to policy 6.1.4.

To prove these claims I rely on archival research: publicly-available OSSTF documents including bargaining bulletins, annual action plans, and annual standing committee reports from the years 2011 to 2014. In constructing a critical lens to use in document analysis, and to attend to the gaps between history on paper and history as rank and filers experienced it, I referred to my own notes and observations from the strike as an OSSTF member, and to publicly-available documents produced by dissident members including the group Rank-and-file Education Workers of Toronto (REWT), of which I was a member in late 2012 and early 2013.

NEOLIBERALISM IN EDUCATION

Although the neoliberal project of “privatization, deregulation, casualization of the workforce” and “deunionization” (Fletcher and Gapasin, 2008, 9) is global in reach, neoliberal reforms to the Ontario education system have not come about easily. In part, this is due to steady opposition from public education workers’ unions. Compared to reports about the dismantling of entire school districts in American cities and their reconstituted patchwork of privately-run charter schools and eviscerated public schools⁴, neoliberalism in the Ontario school system seems fairly benign. But neoliberal practices can be seen in both well-developed and embryonic forms in Ontario’s system. Bill 115 is an example of the latter. Neoliberal reforms to the Ontario education system started to emerge in earnest in the 1980s, intensified at a rapid pace in the 1990s, and were somewhat mitigated by union-government collaboration in the 2000s. Introduced in 2012, the Liberal government’s Bill 115 sought to reduce teacher salaries, sick days, and retirement gratuities, while leaving intact relatively decent features of the school system, like class size caps, a clever strategy that made use of the public’s perception of teachers as well-off and spoiled.

At the heart of Bill 115 was the attempt to set a precedent for the disempowerment of education worker unions, which are uniquely positioned as the defenders of a common good that is both necessary and burdensome for neoliberal capitalism. When considered as part of the global neoliberal project, education can be seen as a way to reproduce workers who are subservient to the state and capital. Education gives individuals the skills needed for producing commodities, as Hopkins and Wallerstein (1977, 128) describe in their account of global commodity

⁴ See, for instance, the schooling situation in Philadelphia, recently described by DiStefano (6 May, 2014).

chains. From this perspective, students and the education they receive are worth as much as the labour the students will eventually contribute to commodity chains. Students with basic math and literacy skills are the products of the labour process of teachers. Like social workers and other public sector workers, teachers' work is driven by quality service rather than quantity of product. Quality public education, then, can be seen as an expenditure that is simultaneously necessary for reproducing the labour force as well as a burdensome expenditure. As Lois Weiner (2012, 6) puts it:

“Since most jobs being created require no more than an eighth-grade education (think of Walmart’s “associates”), only a handful of people need to acquire the sophisticated thinking skills to manage and control the world’s productive resources...Therefore, a well-educated (and well-paid) teaching force, it is argued by elites establishing educational policy, is a waste of scarce public money.”

In the global economy, curriculum that covers liberal arts and critical thinking can be sacrificed for concrete skills-based learning delivered by educators controlled by excessive managerial oversight. However, studies in resistant teacher practices point to the transformative potential and semi-autonomous character of education; the process of teaching and learning cannot be reduced to its economic role in keeping the system going.⁵ Seen from a profit-making perspective, education is unwieldy, costly, essential, and a potential source of private wealth.

Public sector unions are obstacles to the process of dismantling public school systems. In so doing, they also block the opening up of education to privatization; they stand in the way of transforming the education sector into a source of private wealth. Neoliberal imperatives help create chaos in a public system by making schools, jobs, and programs all insecure by being subjected to constant evaluation and elimination. In the context of stagnant wages and increased costs of living, submitting education to marketized control – making funding contingent on student achievement and teacher performance funding, or forcing school boards to balance budgets – turns schools into spaces of competition and scarcity. In this precarious and insecure environment, teachers and students become more easily disciplined, and made increasingly willing and able to be part of a precarious, flexible and submissive workforce. As is generally the case in jurisdictions where labour rights exist, when

⁵ See, for instance, Brogan, 2014.

Ontario governments have not achieved their desired changes to public sector spending through collective bargaining, they have forced these changes through legislative attacks on labour rights, such as Bill 115.

In his 1999 study *Retooling the Mind Factory*, Alan Sears discusses the reorganization of the public sector in Ontario along the lines of lean production; a project he calls the “lean state”, to mimic the profitability of the private sector. In Ontario’s education system, this process began with state-commissioned educational policy papers in the 1980s that recommended curriculum compression for students and work intensification for teachers. These papers threatened to bring neoliberalism into the classroom by proposing that the government link curriculum with measurable outcomes and accountability (Hanson, 2013, 149). Under the New Democratic Party provincial government from 1990 to 1995, teachers’ wages were cut through unpaid furlough days (Hanson, 2013, 300). In 1995, many of the recommendations from the 1980s became reality when Progressive Conservative Mike Harris was elected as Ontario’s premier. The Harris era saw dramatic changes to the nature of Ontario’s primary and secondary curriculum, funding, and laws governing teachers’ unions. These changes brought technocratic discourses of markets and efficiency to bear on education, and created a public climate hostile to teachers. Prominent features of Ontario students’ contemporary experience come from that era. For instance, the Grades 3, 6 and 10 standardized tests, the four-year high school curriculum (as opposed to the five years that existed previously), and a heavy emphasis on job readiness across the curriculum. Legislation removed principals and vice-principals from the teachers’ unions and amalgamated school boards. Local taxes no longer fund education; instead, the provincial government both raises and directs education funding. School boards no longer have local financial autonomy. The new funding formula, still operative today, allocates money based on number of students instead of per school. In effect, this has forced boards to balance budgets year after year through job and program reductions.

The Liberal Party came to power in 2003 and has enjoyed financial and moral support from education workers’ unions. Although it has occasionally increased education funding for the purposes of keeping class sizes “down” (though never as small as teachers would prefer), it has not reversed Harris’ neoliberal reforms. Successive Liberal governments have not scrapped the Harris-era funding formula, so that school boards remain underfunded, and job and program reductions continue. One effect of downsizing and underfunding in a context of increasingly

complex student needs is the neoliberal hallmark of work intensification. Education workers undertake more and more job tasks without equivalent training or compensation to do so well.

Faced with declining enrolment in addition to the Harris-era funding formula, boards are certainly laying off education workers (Rushowy, 2013), but union-driven placement procedures still protect staff with seniority, and retain and gradually re-place laid off staff for up to a year. This could be described as a type of managed precarity that affects increasing numbers of permanent teachers. Meanwhile, the number of newly certified unemployed teachers expands while the possibility that they get hired into permanent jobs dwindles. Although Ontario schools boards have not been selling off schools or programs to private service providers to the extent that school authorities in the U.S. have, discourses of declining student achievement have contributed to perceived need for low-cost programs like Teach for Canada to “rescue” racialized and poor students from a public system in crisis (Choise, 2013). Bill 115 went after the salaries and benefits of teachers – a far less disturbing spectre than wholesale school closures and layoffs – but it sought these cuts via the imposition of unconstitutional changes to the collective bargaining process. Bill 115, discussed below, should be understood as a step towards disabling unions’ already limited control over education funding and working conditions, and this step is essential to opening the door to well-organized precarity and privatization in the public sector.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

A growing literature contends that social movement unionism is a powerful model for resisting these neoliberal attacks on public sector unions and on public services (Camfield, 2007; Fletcher, 2011; Weiner, 2012). Camfield specifically delineates the three types of social unions, and this delineation is also used by Bill Fletcher Jr. (2011): social unions, mobilization unions, and social movement unions, each of which involve member involvement and the involvement of non-union members in setting unions’ agendas and designing campaigns.

Rooted in an economism that takes workers’ workplace-based interests as its starting point, business unions are not critical of status quo social relations and they focus on providing service to members through grievances and contract enforcement. Often understood as corporate-like organizations, they pride themselves on being a respectable and pragmatic (if not non-partisan) partner of industry and the state. Their main interest is to defend the workplace interests of their members (e.g.

wages and working conditions), hence the emphasis on staff providing service to members.

In contrast, social unions do not necessarily abandon more traditional and business-union mechanisms for defending workers' workplace interests (Ross, 2012), but they are additionally motivated by the interests of its members as citizens. Social unions mount campaigns based on non-economistic interests in ways that emphasize that their members share interests with non-union members, and that show that the public stands to benefit from gains made by the union. They see inequality within and beyond the workplace and, as such, are more critical of current social relations (Camfield, 2007; Ross, 2012). This orientation means that social unions understand their members as sharing a range of workplace and non-workplace interests, such as quality public education or health care, with the working class in general.

The example of OSSTF's practice supports Ross' claim that unions do not normally adhere to only one model of unionism. Through its focus on servicing members, maintaining contracts, and collaborating with the employer, OSSTF engages in business union practices; through its coalitional work with larger labour bodies like the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, its internal democratic structure that theoretically enables member involvement, and its (albeit limited) support for non-economistic campaigns and movements, OSSTF engages in social unionism practices.

Activists and leaders in OSSTF can avail themselves of a rich literature on the transformation of unions from outdated corporate entities that earn the resentment of the unorganized, to vibrant working-class organizations that can mobilize beyond their traditional membership base in the interests in social justice. Social movement unionism, as articulated through the work of activist-scholars like Lois Weiner and Jane McAlevey, positions members as the key to unions as vehicles for social justice. Weiner (2012, 24-28, 38) emphasizes the necessary work of relationship-building with education workers across different job classes, many of whom have far less income and protections than teachers, and with parents. McAlevey's recent book (2012) documents contract victories won through the whole-worker approach to organizing. This approach collapses the false dichotomy between union members and community members so that a union member's interest extends beyond her immediate economic interests in good wages and working conditions, to include her wider interest in, for instance, affordable housing or quality public healthcare. In this model, union organizers depend on

members as organizers and tap the power of worker knowledge before and during bargaining through constant surveying, petitioning, open meetings, and open bargaining. McAlevey's work makes clear that the involvement of members and that of the public go hand in hand: it is through rank-and-file knowledge that deeper coalitions with the public can be formed; it is through sensitivity to public interests that unions can take on campaigns that are more likely to be relevant to society as a whole.

Amanda Tattersall (2009) has written about the case of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation taking a substantial risk when it convened extensive public inquiries into education as a precursor to establishing bargaining demands. A major parents' organization was equal partner in the coalition and insisted that salaries not be made an issue at the beginning of the process, but by the end of months of televised town-hall meetings, parent representatives decided they wanted teachers' salary increases to be one of their demands in improving public education. Parents came to see salary increases as essential to qualitative improvements in public education.

A case that brings together a startling degree of involvement of members with that of the public comes from St. Paul, Minnesota, where the teachers' union first opened up the bargaining process to rank and file members, and then to parents and the public. Members, parents, and the public sit in the bargaining room during talks, participate in caucuses with the union's negotiators, and sometimes address the audience on issues like class sizes or resources. In preparation for their most recent round of bargaining, the union formed their demands from member surveys as well as from parent "study groups" (Faber 2013). McCartin (2013, 60) sees the key to public sector union survival, first, as the ability to redefine the common good along lines that resonate with private sector workers and, second, as the willingness to put the common good at the centre union campaigns, including contract campaigns. In addition to the case of the Chicago Teachers' Union, he cites the example of the Oregon's Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 which, as part of their 2013 bargaining campaign called "In It Together", demanded a cap on post-secondary tuition and "renegotiation of predatory interest rate swaps."

It is no coincidence that education unions that engage members to an extraordinary degree also engage parents; the two depend on and strengthen each other. The fact that OSSTF member survey results from 2009 indicated that members wanted a better partnership with the public

and with parents casts a tragic shadow on the missed opportunities of the Bill 115 campaign to engage union members, parents, and students. OSSTF lacks the type of longer-term relationship building with parent and community organizations that can foster genuine public understanding and support for contract demands. The longer-term effects of mobilization, such as member education, empowerment, and transformation into member-organizers, can only make the union a more powerful threat to neoliberal forces, whether it be in the context of shared issues like healthcare or workplace issues like a fight for a good contract.

BILL 115 AND OSSTF'S RESPONSE

OSSTF's history dates back to 1919, and is punctuated by moments of radical action including the successful 1920 campaign for equal pay for women teachers, an illegal walkout in 1973 that secured teachers' right to strike, and participation from 1995 to 1998 in various actions against Mike Harris' attacks on the poor, workers, and public services. Whereas the OSSTF had traditionally supported the NDP, it shifted to "strategic voting" in the 2000s, a strategy that translated into support for the Liberals. In preparation for the 2003 provincial election, unions launched an anti-conservative campaign called the Working Families Coalition which called on voters to vote for any party but conservative (Savage, 2012, 80). The Liberals were voted into power in 2003, 2007 and 2011. Throughout this period, OSSTF positioned itself as a "partner" with the government under the premiership of Dalton McGuinty, known as the "education premier". It also made more contributions to Liberal election campaigns than it did to those of the NDP (Cooke, 2013). Although local OSSTF districts and school boards did experience intermittent bargaining battles, OSSTF as a provincial organization did not undertake major strike activity in this period. Additionally in the 2000s, the tradition of OSSTF provincial bargaining emerged, in which the provincial government and the OSSTF provincial team start talks months about education funding before local bargaining begins. Local autonomy has been preserved only for negotiating working conditions.⁶

The era of labour peace came to an end in early 2012 when McGuinty announced that he would cut public sector salaries in a move towards balancing the provincial budget (Mills, 2012). In February, the province released its commissioned Drummond Report which outlined cuts to public programs and services. The Report

⁶ The most recent iteration of "two-tiered bargaining" (Hanson, 2013, 107) is Bill 122, passed in early April, 2014 (see Brown, 2014).

informed the subsequent 2012 Ontario budget's \$500 million cuts to education funding through wage restraints on education workers. The government warned it would enforce these cuts through legislation if the education unions did not accept them. OSSTF thus went into organizing mode; by April 16 its legal team had drafted a constitutional challenge (Coran, 16 April, 2012).

In the months that followed, provincial-level talks crumbled between the government and all affected education unions save for the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). In July, OECTA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government, which included a two year wage freeze, frozen salary grid movement for teachers who have been teaching less than ten years, a fifty percent sick day cut, and abolishing the sick day bank (OECTA, 2012). In order to bring OSSTF and other education worker unions in line with the OECTA MOU, Minister of Education Laurel Broten introduced the cynically-named Putting Students First Act, Bill 115, to legislature in August. Passed on September 11, Bill 115 imposed terms and conditions on OSSTF members identical to those in the OECTA MOU by stipulating that any collective agreement the local bargaining units and local employers came up with could not be substantially different from the OECTA MOU and would be subject to modifications and approval by the Minister. Bill 115 also gave education unions the deadline of December 31 by which they had to bargain identical agreements or have them imposed. During the period of time in which Bill 115 was in effect, from September 2012 to January 2013, collective bargaining effectively no longer existed for education workers' unions because they were hamstrung by austerity parameters and the Minister's discretion over the contents of the agreements.

OSSTF's anti-Bill 115 campaign began with McGuinty's announcement that he would seek education sector cuts, and was characterized throughout by an emphasis on the government's "unacceptable" and "unprecedented attack on members' rights" and labour rights in general, rather than on the economic losses teachers would suffer, or on the effect of the Bill on the quality of education (Mills, 2012). At this point, OSSTF was not alone in opposing the impending attack on the public sector. On April 21, OSSTF bussed members from across Ontario to participate in the Ontario Federation of Labour's Day of Action Against the Cuts. Ken Coran's speech at that rally emphasized the non-economic element of teachers' opposition to austerity:

“And when you respect something, that means you value it, you appreciate it, and you listen to it. The recent actions from this government show exactly the opposite. There is not respect... We’re here today to change that, to show this government that they better start respecting the power of the people.” (OSSTF/FEESO Stands Strong, 2012)

Coran here is mourning the abrupt unilateral withdrawal of the government from what had been perceived as a respectful partnership, and he invokes popular power, something that veers away from business unionism and gestures towards the broader non-economistic outlook of social movement unionism.

Yet it gradually became known to OSSTF members that Coran had made this speech only days after offering a major concession to the government on April 18, 2012, without member consent or prior knowledge. The offer appears to have been an attempt to appease the government because the main component of the offer was a 0 percent wage increase for two years. In a bargaining bulletin dated April 23, 2012, OSSTF’s provincial office outlined the offer and called it an “equitable and manageable wage freeze” (Coran, 23 April 2012). Although this bargaining bulletin was available online, many members found out about the offer through an OSSTF advertisement in the Toronto Star in late May that announced the proposal underneath the headline “We’re doing our part to ensure stability in public education...now it’s the government’s turn” (“We’re doing our part”, 2012). OSSTF made this offer in exchange for nothing, it presumed this would be enough to convince the government to not pursue legislation to enforce the cuts. The union signalled to the government that it was willing to start from a weak, concessionary position; it accepted the neoliberal narrative of there being no alternative but to find savings by cutting “costs”.

Early on, OSSTF communicated with its members by issuing Bargaining Bulletins that outlined the impact of the impending crisis and the likelihood of a strike vote after the contracts expired on August 31. At its disposal in crafting a bargaining and fight-back strategy were the results of local negotiating surveys from early 2012 as well as decisions taken at a provincial gathering of local presidents. These methods of communication and collaboration between leaders and members will be discussed more fully below. Noteworthy here is that communicating with and building support among parents, students, and wider communities was not as visible, beyond the issuing of press releases. This was

evident when the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and OSSTF held a joint rally on August 28 at the Provincial Legislature drew thousands, and few in the crowd were not union members.

After having cancelled an earlier scheduled strike vote (OSSTF District 13, 2012)⁷, OSSTF finally held a successful strike vote in its locals in late September. In October, OSSTF and other education worker unions filed a court challenge on the grounds that Bill 115 is unconstitutional⁸, and teachers in ETFO and OSSTF voluntarily withdrew their supervision of extracurricular activities. The following month, OSSTF initiated a limited two month strike during which teachers continued reporting for work but did not complete attendance or administrative duties, and formally stopped supervising extracurricular activities (Coran, 25 October, 2012). Public interest in the conflict ramped up: call-in radio shows, news segments, and social media buzzed with stories from parents frustrated with the extracurricular boycott. Starting on December 10th, OSSTF members took the further step of entering their worksites only fifteen minutes before the beginning of the school day and leaving fifteen minutes after its end (Nesbitt, 2012).

This selective strike occurred while local OSSTF bargaining teams, under the direction of OSSTF's provincial bargaining team, tried to come up with local agreements with school boards that would satisfy the Minister of Education's strict criteria. Many found OSSTF's willingness to negotiate under conditions it was publicly protesting to be confusing. When members of seven local bargaining units were asked to vote on tentative agreements, only two, York and Upper Grand, voted in favour (Pecoskie, 2012). Upper Grand OSSTF had three local executive members quit in protest of provincial office interference in the local democratic process (Shuttleworth, 2012). The OSSTF provincial leadership took the "no" votes as a sign they were on the wrong track, and they called off all further local bargaining (OSSTF, 28 November, 2012). It is possible that this dissonance between members and leaders could have been prevented by involving members in the process of setting priorities and crafting strategy well before bargaining had begun.

OSSTF protested in other ways, but at no time significantly included in their actions people who stand to benefit the most from strong labour

⁷ An OSSTF member's account of Ken Coran's demise claims that "He even, at the request of Andrea Horwath, called off strike votes 2 days before the K-W [Kingston-Waterloo] election as it was perceived that the publicity surrounding such votes would damage the chances of the NDP candidate" (Heffernan, 2013).

⁸ To date, this court challenge is still in process (Côté, 2013).

rights of the sort OSSTF claimed to stand for. Parents, students, and non-OSSTF workers were noticeably absent at OSSTF protests at Liberal MPP offices throughout the fall. This is in contrast to the extensive community and labour collaboration that OSSTF and other unions undertook during the Days of Action against Harris; workers allied with church groups, anti-poverty organizations, social services organizations, and unemployed people hit by social assistance cuts to mount city-wide strikes across the province (LaBotz, 2011). The equivalent to this in the Bill 115 case would have been collaboration with parent groups, youth, and other labour organizations. Not only had there been a historical precedent of working with non-union members on a shared campaign against a government's neoliberal assault, but there were also opportunities for collaboration: in late September and in December, high school students autonomously organized high school walkouts. The media reported that the walkouts were against the teachers' extracurricular boycott, but also against Bill 115 (Sweetman, 2012). Notably, education worker unions did not support the student actions. Furthermore, OSSTF did not engage parents beyond printing a leaflet aimed at the general public; this was not accompanied by any plan for how to distribute the leaflets.⁹

Meanwhile, OSSTF's allies in the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario staged one-day rotating walkouts across the province. Although CUPE, the union representing education support staff, threatened a one-day walkout should agreements be imposed after December 31, they did not engage in any job action. OSSTF members and other observers complained about this lack of coordinated strategy between unions (Kanter, 2013). A public opinion poll showed that many Ontarians thought that the anti-Bill 115 strategy of limited strike, combined with narrowly conceived protests and ongoing local bargaining, was ineffective and confusing (Benzie, 2012). OSSTF generated the most controversy in its decision to cut extracurricular activities.

Capitulation to the government's austerity agenda began in earnest in late December as the deadline for "substantially identical" agreements approached. CUPE negotiated their own MOU with the government on December 31 which members ratified by mid-January. Because Bill 115 declared strike activity after December 31 illegal, OSSTF provincial office told members to resume all normal duties, yet many continued

⁹ The pamphlet featured a photograph of predominantly white students and a white teacher. After teachers expressed criticism that this was not an accurate portrayal of Ontario's diverse student population, in December OSSTF released a version with a different photograph portraying a more accurately diverse group of students.

to voluntarily boycott extracurriculars. ETFO had been planning a full walkout on January 11, and OSSTF followed suit. But to the bewilderment of education workers who wanted cross-union coordination, the latter planned their walkout for January 16. The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) ruled the walkout illegal and both unions called off their planned actions. On January 23, Laurel Broten took any remaining steam out of the anti-Bill 115 movement by repealing the Bill, declaring that it had accomplished what it had set out to do, by virtue of forcing unions to come up with their own concessionary MOUs or by having imposed them as of January 1.

The terrain shifted again days later. Because Dalton McGuinty had resigned amid scandal in October, the post of premier had remained empty until the Liberal Party Leadership convention in late January. While OSSTF, other unions, and various anti-poverty groups protested outside the convention, party delegates inside elected Kathleen Wynne. She promised to repair the government's relationship with teachers but refused to rip up any forced concessionary contracts ("Ontario's premier-designate", 2013). Regardless, OSSTF went ahead and resumed negotiations with the new government, with Liz Sandals as Minister of Education. In late February, OSSTF recommended that teachers end their extracurricular boycott as it was ready to engage in discussions with the province again, even as ETFO did not end theirs until a month later (Alphonso, 2013). In April, a majority of members voted in favour of a tentative agreement in the midst of rank and file "Vote No" campaign (REWT, 2013). The agreement solidified a loss of nine out of twenty sick days and the sick day bank, a 97-day freeze for newer teachers still moving through the salary grid, and guaranteed "savings" to the province through a voluntary unpaid leave scheme combined with mandatory unpaid Professional Development days (Alphonso, 2013).

The OSSTF's relationship with the Liberal Party of Ontario from the spring throughout the fall of 2012 has been described as an aberration from a longer pattern of financial and political support (Cooke, 2013). In addition to public statements declaring disappointment and a sense of betrayal, the aberration also took the form of the OSSTF throwing its organizational resources behind NDP candidate Catherine Fife's provincial by-election campaign in the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo. Fife won, decisively putting the ruling Liberals into a minority position in legislature, though this did not stop Bill 115 from passing on September 11. Despite its support for the NDP in Kitchener-Waterloo and its public rhetoric, OSSTF demonstrated a reluctance to truly

upset its relationship with the Liberals. When news of McGuinty's resignation broke in mid-October, the union even issued a bizarre press release congratulating him on his term in office and wishing him well (OSSTF, 16 Oct, 2012). Murray Cooke (2013) observed: "some activists have feared that the unions are merely waiting for an opportunity to patch up their differences rather than fight against Bill 115." These fears were correct. In late January 2013, the press exposed \$30,000 in donations from the Toronto local of OSSTF District 12 to four Liberal candidates running in the leadership race (Toronto Star, 4 Feb, 2013). Having started with the extracurricular ban, the public image of OSSTF leadership as "uncaring" towards students became entrenched. Commented a Toronto Star editorial:

"When teachers appeal for public support by denouncing the Liberals and Bill 115 as an affront to democracy, let's remember that their Toronto local is playing an old-fashioned political game. Now that we know how generous the union was with Liberal candidates, including those who were in cabinet when Bill 115 was passed, it's even more of a pity that they can't extend a similar kindness to students." (Toronto Teachers' Union Plays, 2013)

More public embarrassment arose when, having retired from his position as OSSTF President, Ken Coran agreed to run (unsuccessfully, in the end) as a Liberal candidate in the August 2013 by-election in the riding of London West (Taylor, 2013). Although he was roundly shamed by unionists and the left for this move, it lent credence to long-standing doubts about the sincerity of OSSTF's commitment to fighting Bill 115. The union's commitment to respectability and electoral politics overshadowed its commitment to resisting the government's attack.¹⁰

Throughout the Bill 115 period, by rhetorically focusing on the anti-democratic nature of the government's agenda, the union put itself in a better position than it would have if it had emphasized material losses, given that teachers' decent salaries and benefits are regularly derided in the media as exorbitant. Each of the education unions attempted to use the rights framework to argue that other workers could end up suffering from austerity-by-legislation's downward pressure on wages and labour rights. The narrative of "If they can do this to us, then they will do this

¹⁰ In the 2014 provincial elections, the teachers' unions again implicitly supported the Liberal party by directing union members to vote strategically (for anyone but the Conservatives). Some went further. Unsurprisingly, the OSSTF District 12 (Toronto) executive explicitly asked its members to vote for Liberal candidates.

to you” indicated a sense of social justice and a transcendence of narrow economic interests. However, OSSTF’s attempt at a non-economistic orientation was more rhetorical than real: it did not translate into actions on the ground that were broadly inclusive of workers other than unionized education workers.

The rhetoric was also more militant than the union’s actions: in its initial concessionary wage freeze offer, its unpopular tentative agreements bargained during the Bill 115 period, and its inability to sever its ties to the Liberal Party, OSSTF accepted imposed conditions of austerity and pursued “respectability” even as it claimed to oppose the government’s machinations. The union continued to attempt to reassure members that the pending constitutional challenge still held promise, which was the same advice given to the union by the government throughout the Bill 115 period: take the fight to the courts and leave the kids out of it. As was abundantly clear in the unions’ acceptance of the OLRB ruling, the rights framework depends on legal institutions for enforcement and takes the struggle out of the realm of public protest and into the courts. In other words, the rights framework has a deep demobilizing affect. Additionally, the case of teachers in British Columbia¹¹, in which the B.C. Government blatantly ignored the courts’ ruling in the teachers’ favour against the government’s abrogation of collective bargaining rights, demonstrates the unreliability of pro-labour court decisions. While a position of “rights for all” is better than a position of “rights for us”, any rights-based approach might not be as convincing as one that shows that degraded labour rights compromises the common good of quality education. For instance, ending collective bargaining rights would take teachers’ front-line knowledge out of the decision-making process over what students and schools need. McCartin (2013, 59) observes:

“While such rights-based arguments resonate well among many union members, they translate poorly to the vast majority of unorganized workers... these arguments can also at times seem blind to the realities faced by the vast majority of private sector workers who currently lack a realistic prospect of improving their own lot through unionization. Such workers doubt that the benefits gained by someone else’s union will ever trickle down to them.”

¹¹ The court ruled in 2011 that the B.C. government’s 2002 legislated removal of class sizes and composition from collective bargaining amounted to a breach of constitutional labour rights (Podaski, 2014). The recent B.C. teachers’ strike (settled in September 2014) hinged on class composition.

MEMBER DISSENT AND PARTICIPATION

There is no doubt that OSSTF provincial and local leaders wanted the best deal for their members, and because of the dire situation they were aiming for as few losses as possible. But the task of deciding that the goal was to minimize losses rather than defend the status quo or seek gains, and then the task of deciding how to minimize losses, was monopolized by provincial leaders. One could argue that union leaders and their staff are best situated to take on the hard decisions that rank and file members lack the skills or interest to do themselves. The assumption about members in such a model is not only that they are disengaged, but also that they are comfortable with being disengaged. OSSTF's resistance to Bill 115 might have drawn on the expertise of lawyers and staff, but it lacked member involvement which resulted in some of OSSTF's moves being criticized by members on the grounds that they did not represent what members wanted and that they had conceded too much. Members communicated their dissent through a variety of texts, from petitions to articles, usually posted online. Here I highlight a few examples of these texts and I look at underlying union practices that enabled the neglect of member concerns.

Two petitions to the OSSTF Provincial Executive (PE) circulated in the winter of 2012, calling on them to increase member input into provincial strategy, and taking issue with their concessionary position. The first, signed by 500, came within the same week that Bill 115 imposed the parameters of the MOU on all education workers that had not come up with agreements, and that Laurel Broten repealed Bill 115.¹² It stated: "What we, the members of the OSSTF, need from our union is a strategy of education, ongoing democratic input, and mobilization of our membership and our surrounding communities" (Adopt a Real Strategy, 2013). The second petition to Provincial Executive received 122 signatures and took aim at the recent announcement that talks with the government were in progress. A signatory explained her reasons for signing the petition as follows: "Before our PE can speak on behalf of members they must survey them. The rank and file do not feel their voice is heard. There needs to be a formal and regular vehicle for promoting communication up from the members to executive (as well as improved communication from PE). Do not say PE speaks for members when they have never asked them directly how they feel about issues." (Push the Pause Button, 2013).

¹² The author of this paper participated in writing this petition.

The union's decision to resume talks with the new government of Kathleen Wynne generated member criticism. In response to the union's late February announcement that it had resumed talks with the government, teacher Jim Springer stated in an open letter to the Provincial Executive: "In short, it is painfully clear that our leadership has accepted the most significant strips to our collective agreements in decades and is no longer prepared to fight against the almost certainly permanent loss of significant benefits accumulated over many years of hard fought negotiations." (Stringer, 2013). An Ottawa teacher published an article online in early March, similarly dismayed at the resumption of talks, and addressed the OSSTF decision to resume extracurriculars even though ETFO continued their ban: "Here's a thought: how about the leaders of OSSTF and ETFO sit down with each other and come up with a collective, cooperative, collaborative, and united course of action?." (Kanter, 2013). Kanter wrote that he had abandoned his initial draft that had asked the Provincial Executive to resign, and stated: "What I ask instead is that you... survey the membership on the issue. Are we willing to accept the strips? If not, are we prepared to stand firm until we achieve a satisfactory resolution. I am confident that you will be surprised by the strength of the resolve of the membership." (Stringer, 2013).

These comments directly challenge the union's low expectations of members' militancy. Criticism, debate, and dissent within unions is par for the course, but when a union is in bargaining, the strength of their position requires member buy-in of the sort that comes from sustained member involvement from the beginning. There is no evidence that OSSTF leaders sought out and processed rank-and-file member input in a systematic, province-wide manner. In contrast to member initiative and power at the heart of social movement unionism, OSSTF's response to Bill 115 suggests that OSSTF leaders view the members' role in the union as primarily supportive of their union leaders, a view that aligns OSSTF with the tradition of business unionism. What internal structures exist in OSSTF, and how did they contribute to the dissonance between members and leaders? Both communication (conveying information) and consultation (incorporating member feedback) in the period under study relied on OSSTF's internal democratic structure. In theory, this structure facilitates member engagement from the bottom up, but in practice, a *laissez-faire* approach to member engagement means that the bottom-up potential of the structure is under-utilized.

While communication is no substitute for collaborative discussion, it is essential for organizational cohesion and rank-and-file morale.

Members' knowledge of the volatile situation before, during, and after the strike came from provincial office, either directly, or through local executives. OSSTF's provincial office primarily used online bargaining bulletins to communicate with its members, but the distribution of these bulletins was organized in a hierarchical, trickle-down fashion: the provincial office posted the bulletins on their website and then it was up to local districts to notify their members via email of the website link to check for updates. There was no way to check that the members at the worksites actually read the information. These bulletins were later supplemented with confidential Negotiations Updates emailed from local offices directly to members, sometimes containing text written by OSSTF Provincial. If rank and file members did not take individual initiative to follow these bulletins and updates, they could receive information from their branch president.¹³ However, the activity of branch presidents is voluntary, and not monitored or ensured. It is unsurprising that many members only heard about the offered wage freeze of April 2012 through the media.

OSSTF's consultation with members for the purpose of developing bargaining and strike strategies was almost non-existent, and where it did exist, it assumed the same *laissez-faire*, voluntary character as its communication methods: members were welcome to be as uninformed and uninvolved as they wished. In addition to analysis of political and economic forces, OSSTF leaders based their strategy on negotiating surveys, and meetings with local leaders (Coran, 2012a). As is the case in many unions, the bargaining issues on OSSTF's local bargaining surveys from 2012 were preselected, and members were asked to simply rank them. This diverges from the more intensive member-surveying methods used in social movement unions in which union representatives present surveys to members in one-one conversations or small meetings, allowing the feedback to take on an open-ended, qualitative, and collaborative character. In 2012, OSSTF member surveys were then fed into conceptual briefs. Before the union's negotiators head into local bargaining, branch presidents at local council meetings approve the conceptual brief. An equivalent process occurs at the provincial level. However, conceptual briefs are vague and do not indicate priorities. After councils vote on these conceptual briefs, OSSTF bargaining becomes a confidential process without any transparency or accountability mechanism. Because there are no publicly available documents from OSSTF that show the results of bargaining surveys, it is unclear

¹³ A Branch President in OSSTF is the equivalent of a shop steward.

what percentage of the membership completed them, and it is unclear how the conceptual briefs compare to the raw data. It is also unclear to what (if any) extent members had indicated prior to the strike that a 0 percent wage increase, or any of the other conditions arrived at in the final OSSTF MOU of April 2013, was acceptable to them.

The internal democratic structure of OSSTF underlies the problems that arose with communication and collaboration with members in regards to Bill 115. Structurally speaking, OSSTF branch presidents and the members at their worksites can be as uninformed and unengaged with the process as they want. Theoretically, rank-and-file members can communicate their concerns to branch presidents who then bring these concerns, in the form of motions or questions to the local executive, to district or bargaining unit council meetings. And theoretically, branch presidents attend district council meetings to hear updates from their district executive about what they had been told by provincial office, and then pass this information to members at the worksite. However, to date, there is no widely-adopted mechanism to ensure that Branch presidents attend district council meetings or that they report back to their membership. Additionally, district and bargaining unit meetings tend to be weighed down with informational updates from executives at the expense of healthy debate and decision-making by delegates.

These factors meant that strategy-making ultimately rested in the hands of provincial office, at times in consultation with a Provincial Council made up of local presidents. This process assumes that local presidents accurately understand their local members' desires, and possess the will to represent them at the provincial level. But just as there is no standard practice to ensure that branch presidents bring forward concerns from the worksite, there is none to ensure that local presidents bring forward concerns from their district. There are few ways to ensure fair representation of rank and file concerns beyond the stock belief that if members do not approve of their representatives' actions, they will vote accordingly during internal elections; a belief that has been contested by a range of accounts of internal union clientalism, repression of dissenting members, and "grooming" of loyal supporters.¹⁴

Strike votes and ratification votes are two measures of member consent to provincial strategy. That the strike vote of November 2012 resulted in a positive majority indicates that members consented to the strategy of a strike, yet this does not shed light on member approval of

¹⁴ For example, see D'Arcy Martin's discussion of vertical union cultures (1995), and Weiner's work more generally.

other elements of the fight-back campaign such as the protests at MPP offices and the refusal to walk out. Strike votes cannot substitute for consultation with members for the purpose of creating a strategy; it is rather a measure of consent after the fact, as is the ratification vote. The agreement reached between the Ontario government and OSSTF Provincial in April 2013 received an 84 percent ratification vote in favour of the agreement. However, official communications from OSSTF do not reveal what percentage of members actually cast ballots in either the ratification vote, or the earlier strike vote.

While the present study can only gesture to potential areas for further research into OSSTF rank and file participation in and consent to executive decision-making, broad rank and file concerns are identifiable in ephemeral grassroots publications produced by OSSTF members. These concerns indicate a criticism of the types of activities in OSSTF that are aligned with the hierarchical organizational structure of business unionism, and indicate a desire for the type of strong internal democracy and member control at the heart of social movement unionism. The conflict between members and leaders over strategy points to a disunity that weakens OSSTF's ability to take on a legislative neoliberal attack on the grounds that it affects all workers. If the fight against Bill 115 symbolized OSSTF's commitment to labour rights for all and a social justice orientation that extends beyond the immediate economic concerns of its members, then bargaining agreements within the parameters of Bill 115 (even after it was repealed) signal an inability to follow through on these commitments. Furthermore, OSSTF's claim to take on a fight for the labour rights of all Ontarians is seriously undermined by OSSTF members' insistence that OSSTF did not even fairly represent its own members. Beyond symbolic implications, OSSTF also set a material precedent: it proved that a government could effectively get a union to consent to and participate in austerity measures against its own workforce.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the member control and public involvement that are key aspects social movement unions, OSSTF's campaign against Bill 115 and its associated bargaining were clearly wanting. However, the same is not necessarily true of OSSTF as an entire province-wide organization, because it is constituted of multiple spaces driven by genuine social justice goals and member activism. OSSTF has numerous provincial committees composed of Provincial Executive

Liaisons, provincial staff members, local leaders, and rank-and-file members, which are oriented towards movements for social justice. For example, in recent years the provincial OSSTF First Nations, Métis and Indigenous Provincial Committee has supported the Idle No More campaign for indigenous sovereignty (OSSTF, 2014a), and the provincial OSSTF Human Rights Committee has directly linked the struggles of migrant and precarious workers to education workers' struggle for labour rights (OSSTF, 2014b). It is often committees and rank and file delegates who bring motions to OSSTF's annual convention that result in social justice-oriented policy positions. For these reasons, the case of OSSTF supports Stephanie Ross' claim that business unionism and social unionism (what I call social movement unionism) contain "elements [that] came together in particular historical and institutional contexts but are not inevitably tied to one another" (2012, 45). It is possible for some business unionism tactics, such as a strong focus on bargaining, to co-exist with and bolster a union's social justice agenda. However, in the case of OSSTF's campaign against Bill 115, OSSTF's use of the business unionism tactics – prioritizing collaboration with the employer while keeping members out of strategizing and negotiating – undermined OSSTF's agenda to preserve public education as a common good.

In addition to greater member involvement and buy-in, OSSTF would have benefitted from greater public buy-in to the union's goals. Public buy-in was not impossible, given OSSTF members' unique position as workers whose labour arguably enhances the greater social good, given the correlation between better working conditions and better learning conditions, and given OSSTF members' social justice activism inside and outside of the union. Public buy-in could have been secured through tactics such as rotating one-day strikes, which could have had less impact on student life than an extracurricular boycott. Instead, the withdrawal of extracurriculars seemed uncoordinated and indefinite to the public, and was easily manipulated by media and politicians to stir up anti-teacher sentiment. The narrow interest of mounting resistance to the government while avoiding the possible fines associated with full walkouts trumped the importance of the relationship between education workers, students, and parents.

Often, contemporary unions are accused of too narrowly focusing on the economic interests of its members to be capable of acting in

concert with equality-seeking groups outside of the union. This can be seen as a part of a broader problem of union sectionalism: unions have become progressively smaller bubbles of a progressively smaller range of privileges.¹⁵ Today's North American unions usually do not represent the most precarious, the least paid, and the most vulnerable layers of the workforce. In order to maintain relevance, numbers, and bargaining power, unions must address the fact that many of their members are much more privileged than the members of the public from whom they request support.

Both social movement union literature and OSSTF member accounts indicate that parent engagement in the agenda of education workers' unions is key to bridging the gap between bargaining and social justice, between the traditionally economic interests of unions and the non-economic interests of the public (of which union members are a part). The potential for the anti-Bill 115 campaign to be member-driven are deeply connected to members' own communities. This top-down approach was at odds with union committees, policies, and autonomous rank-and-file activities (like the various "Vote No" campaigns) that are oriented towards social justice, union democracy, and anti-neoliberalism. To strengthen the social-justice oriented currents within OSSTF, leaders and members would need to transform its internal democratic practises so that members are expected and enabled to become more active in the union. Only then can member-driven relationships with the public and broader social movements move to the centre of union culture. Without this member-driven social justice orientation, OSSTF's bargaining strategy has ultimately set a precedent of union defeat in the face of a government's legislative neoliberal attack.

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¹⁵ See Rose, 2009 for a discussion of union density in Canada.

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Precarious Employment in Ontario's University Sector: Reflections on Collective Bargaining at Carleton University

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ABSTRACT: In this article, the qualitative experiences of the authors as union leaders at Carleton University are drawn upon, along with the public testimonials of union members, during the 2013-14 round of collective bargaining between Carleton University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4600. We contend that the trend towards rising precariousness must be seen as the further “proletarianization” of an increasingly insecure segment of the labour force in Ontario, which includes workers employed in Ontario’s university sector. First, precarious employment in Ontario is examined broadly. Second, we explore precarious work in the university sector more specifically. Third, a case study analysis examining the most recent contract negotiations between CUPE 4600 and Carleton University in Ottawa is examined. This includes: (1) the challenges of mobilization within the union bureaucracy; (2) challenges between the local and National office; and; (3) the role of solidarity in combating precariousness. To conclude, the conditions in which unionized precarious workers can achieve improvements in their workplaces are discussed. It is hoped that other postsecondary union activists can gain from this experience, and in doing so, expand the fight against the negative effects of precarious employment in Ontario and elsewhere.

KEYWORDS: Precarious Work, Carleton University, Austerity, Unions

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 2008 global economic crisis, political power has overwhelmingly come to favour business and corporate interests at the expense of Canadian workers, while neoliberal processes such as privatization, outsourcing, and the spread of precarious employment have accelerated (Peters, 2012). For public sector workers, precarious work provides less pay with few or no benefits, acting as a cheap labour supply for employers purportedly facing cost pressures due to government austerity measures. This restructuring and reorganization of work is regularly carried out through attacks on the historical gains of unions and organized labour. The impact of rising precariousness or “precarity” (Lewchuck et al., 2013) in Ontario is particularly prominent in the area of post-secondary academic employment.

In this article, we draw upon our own qualitative experiences, along with the public testimonials of fellow union members, during the 2013-14 round of collective bargaining between Carleton University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 4600, which represents nearly 2,400 teaching assistants (TA's) and contract instructors (CI's).³ These first-person accounts, we argue, lend support to Bryan Palmer's (2013) materialist, class-analysis, which notes the trend towards rising precariousness or “precarity.” In our view, workplace precarity can be understood as the further “proletarianization” of an increasingly insecure segment of the labour force in Ontario, which includes workers employed in Ontario's university sector.

We contend that the growing core of precarious academic labourers in Ontario can be understood as a constitutive part of the working class based on their socioeconomic position in relation to broader processes of capital accumulation. It thereby follows that, from a class struggle perspective, the theoretical construction of the notion of an entire new social class or “precarariat” (Standing, 2011; Scott, 2012), in contrast to a declining “professoriat” (Burns, 2014, 30), is both theoretically and politically erroneous; this misdiagnosis is class divisive in our view. In the postsecondary sector, the conception of a novel precariat accentuates worker alienation by impeding the development of revolutionary class consciousness amongst workers and students, including adjunct faculty, both inside and outside the university.

³ As local executives involved in strike mobilization activities, Lydia Dobson served as Recording Secretary for CUPE 4600, while Mathew Nelson acted as Vice-President Internal (Unit 1). We participated extensively in the bargaining processes at Carleton over several years, but during this round our contribution was largely directed at devoting our activities to the Local's Strike Mobilization Committee.

In what follows, we examine precarious employment in Ontario. Second, we focus our analysis in the university sector. Third, our case study examines the 2013-14 round of contract negotiations between CUPE 4600 and Carleton University. We explore three features inherent to precarious employment: (1) the challenges of mobilization within the union bureaucracy; (2) challenges between the local and National office; and third, the role of solidarity in combating precariousness. To conclude, we highlight the conditions in which unionized precarious workers can achieve improvements in their workplaces. While the summary that follows is brief, it is our hope that other postsecondary union activists can gain from this experience, and in doing so expand the fight against the negative effects of precarious employment in Ontario and elsewhere.

EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY IN ONTARIO

Workplace precarity is not a new phenomenon, but its qualitative and quantitative dimensions are. From the 1980s onwards, and especially since the 2008 global economic crisis, the use of part-time workers and other forms of precarious labour (CLC, 2014), including shift work, temp jobs and contract positions, has increased markedly (Grant, 2014). “Temporary and part-time work grew faster than full-time and permanent work. The squeeze on the middle class had begun, and employment precarity had become a typical feature of employment for many individuals” (Tiessen, 2014, 6). This suggests both a weakness of organized labour to challenge these workplace conditions, as well as disproportionate capitalist class power over the interests of the working class as a whole (Barkawi, 2013).

The 2008 crisis provided an opportunity for businesses and governments to capitalize on the gradual erosion of job security and life-long employment that has been occurring over the last four decades. As workforces are eroded, different forms of contingent and precarious labour are introduced⁴ “Precarious employment tends to involve greater exposure to hazardous work environments, increased workload, stress, and more time spent travelling between multiple jobs” (McCaffrey, 2013). In both the public and private sectors, these workers are taking on more and more of the tasks and responsibilities previously performed

⁴ One such example is the temporary foreign workers program (TFWP), which has been highly controversial largely due to its association with the exploitation of low-skilled, service sector workers. A moratorium was recently placed on some aspects of TFWP expansion due to rising evidence that the misuse of the program has increased employment rates in certain areas and has contributed to downward pressures on wages (Strauss, 2014).

by full-time workers.⁵ The impact spills over into “family, health and community involvement” (Grant, 2014).

According to the Law Commission of Ontario (2012), around 22 percent of jobs fit the “precarious” definition in the province. In many cases, those adversely affected are women, youth, racialized communities, persons with disabilities, and recent immigrants. According to a McMaster-United Way (2013) study based in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area this phenomenon is increasingly affecting all income and education levels. A 2012 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) documents the growth in precarious work in OECD countries over the last decade and attributes the increase to a “worldwide corporate attack on the right to organize and bargain collectively, by shifting to subcontracting and individual contracts, [and] attacking sectoral and national bargaining” (ILO, 2011, 1).

Women workers in particular are disproportionately paid lower wages. A recent report by the Pay Equity Coalition found that the gap has grown from 28 percent in 2010 to 31.5 percent in 2014, which is further amplified for racialized and aboriginal women, as well as women with disabilities (Drennan, 2014). In a similar vein, “Young workers are facing low wages, precarious work, poor work/life balance, and a high cost of living coupled with exorbitant student debt. The problems are even more significant for young workers marginalized by structural racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and sexism” (CUPE National, 2013, 3). Younger workers also tend to struggle with unemployment and under-employment, exploitative work conditions, a high cost of living and significant student debt (Yalnizyan, 2014).

The uniting factor in all of these struggles is the fight against precarious employment. From a Marxist perspective, as Fanelli (2014, 39) has argued, the renewal of working class politics, and the struggle for public services in Canada, requires a class-oriented labour movement that is not based in the reformism and sectionalism of business unionism and labour aristocracy. The fight for class-based unionism must involve “the freedom of association to collectively bargain on behalf of and in accordance with other workers...” This fight is a *potentiality*, that under specific historic conditions, embodies “an emancipatory force capable of transcending social relations of servitude.” Organized labour has

⁵ It is important to note that precarity also differs between the public and private sectors. In the public sector, precarity relates mainly to the use of short-term, full-time employment, while in the private sector, part-time, long-term employment is most frequent (See Fanelli, 2014a, 123).

transformational capacity; and however small, it can be a venue for a radical working class unionism.

THE PRECARIOUS UNIVERSITY IN ONTARIO

In Ontario's postsecondary education (PSE) sector, austerity measures have long been directed at colleges and universities across the province (Fanelli, 2013, Ch. 5). Budget changes and chronic underfunding have shifted funding away from direct public provisioning towards user-fee models (i.e. tuition) based on competition and profit (Nelson and Meades, 2013). At the same time, colleges and universities have experienced significant spending cuts over the past decade, and while the recession is usually blamed, right-wing governments continue to cut taxes on the wealthy and corporations. The use of precarious workers, in large corporations and universities alike, is quite often a cost-cutting strategy that allows employers to shed legally mandated obligations to their employees in the name of greater workplace "flexibility," less job security, and lower wages and benefits (Crow, 2008; Sears, 2012). "This labour-cost reduction strategy...has had the effect of increasing the number of precariously employed workers in the university sector" (Lafrance, 2010, 2).

The neoliberalization of the university entails new forms of privatization, deregulation and corporatization that are connected to reductions in public funding and oversight (Giroux, 2002). While the adoption of such austerity measures does not necessarily mark the beginning of a new era, the global economic crisis has intensified this funding crisis. Different forms of privatization in the neoliberal university include securing private funding for research, increasing the number of private corporations on campuses, and user fees in the form of higher tuition (Crow, 2008). Moreover, since the 1970s, an attack on the humanities – and their "so-called promotion of anti-establishment sentiment" – has accompanied these changes (Scott, 2012). A concerted effort has also been made to transform the role of academia and the university into little more than something resembling a "technical training facility" or a "corporate research institute" (Eagleton, 2010).

For student-workers such as teaching-assistants (TA's), as well as contract-instructors (CI's) and other "contingent faculty" (Turk, 2008), increased competitiveness creates the insecurity of "being permanently on the edge of unemployment, having to make do with casual, temporary, perhaps part-time work, or combining several jobs" (Callinicos, 2006, 24). As part of an ongoing research project, CUPE's national body

has undertaken the creation of profiles that show demographic and precarity patterns of occupations within sectors. With respect to temporary jobs, "the post-secondary sector stands out; one-third of low-paid jobs in post-secondary education are temporary." (Jansen, 2014, 4). Many of the lower-paid employment sectors also have higher rates of part-time and temporary work.

THE RISE OF A "PRECARIAT"?

In the US context, Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (2014, 22) argue that the continued downward mobility of the "professional-managerial class" captures the new economic reality of a system increasingly structured around precarious employment where part-time, contract and temporary workers who are in an unstable position have limited control over working conditions and wages, and may lack union protection or regulations governing their workplace. This trend has led some to proclaim "the rise of a 'precariat,' a new, distinct class characterized by insecurity and atomization, and therefore, impervious to traditional labor organizing" (Burns, 2014, 31; see also Chomsky, 2012).

Undoubtedly, there are parallels between the US and Canada, yet there remains vast differences between the two countries, their post-secondary education, as well as the availability of public health, factors that make a huge difference in the quality of life of workers across the continent. Canadian sociologists have begun to call attention to the rise of such a precariat, or "social class," whose working conditions are void of consistent "predictability" and financial security. With respect to wages, compared to a full-time professor teaching four courses a year whose salary may range anywhere between \$80,000 to \$150,000 per year, contract faculty teaching the same course load earn on average around \$28,000 per annum (Basen, 2014).

In *Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (2011), economist Guy Standing concludes that it is unlikely that "trade unions could be reformed to represent precariat interests" (cited in Burns, 2014, 22). However, labour historian Bryan Palmer (2013, 42) challenges claims that the contemporary significance of precariousness indicates a separate and distinct class formation in the present context. Palmer critiques Standing for viewing precarious workers as somehow part of a distinctive, "new class force," within "a hierarchy of differentiated class formations," as part of "a new neoliberal global economy" (Palmer, 2013, 42-43).

Palmer counters the view that, “Stable working-class identities have been swept aside; a sense of proletarian power as a transformative agent of social relations of exploitation and oppression is now ended.” (ibid). Standing (2011), on the other hand, argues that in light of this new, youth-led precarious class -- the so-called dangerous *precariat* – the traditional labour movement finds itself antiquated and dying. For Palmer (2013, 45), however, precariousness has always been “the fundamental feature of class formation rather than the material basis of a new, contemporary class, with an agenda silent on the necessity of socialism.” While the experience of dispossession is highly heterogeneous “...dispossession, in general, nonetheless defines proletarianization” (Palmer, 2013, 49).

Rebecca Burns (2014, 33) argues that “precarity is not a new phenomenon...[but a] state of affairs that occurs when the balance of power tips in the favour of employers.” Similarly, Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster (2014, 2) note that Marx himself characterized the general condition of workers as one of precariousness: “The higher the productivity of labour, the greater is the pressure of the workers on the means of employment, the more precarious therefore becomes the condition for their existence, namely sale of their own labour-power for the increase of alien wealth, or in other words the self-valorization of capital.” In the present context, however, the Great Recession and the deep stagnation that followed, has made the situation of Canadian workers ever more precarious. As Unifor economist Jim Stanford (2013) has recently noted, there is “a myth of Canadian exceptionalism” when federal leaders consistently espouse the virtues of Canada’s recovery following the Great Recession. In reality, overall prosperity, as well as economic and employment performance, has largely stagnated since that time.

In examining the impact of precarious employment on PSE, we focus on Carleton University, which in many respects has reproduced/reinforced? the growing ranks of low-wage, precarious workers within institutions that once anchored the so-called white-collar “*professoriat*” across the sector. We focus on the most recent round of collective bargaining between the administration and CUPE 4600, which represents TA’s and CI’s. But rather than juxtapose a *precariat*, with the stable working class identity of the *proletariat*, what is needed in the university sector is a unified politics of class struggle that highlights the reality of differentiation within the dispossessed, but does not accentuate divisions that can minimize collective responses or incapacitate the working class in its entirety.

BARGAINING AUSTERITY AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY

CUPE 4600 was founded in 1979 as CUPE 2323 in response to widespread workplace inequality across campus. TA's received different rates of pay for the same work, had no guarantee of reappointment in successive terms, job security or benefits of any kind. Employees could be fired with little or no warning CUPE 4600s predecessor, then as now, fought for improved wages, working conditions, job security, and benefits for its members. TA's merged with contract instructors of Carleton University in 1994 forming CUPE 4600, which then represented nearly 1800 TAs (Unit 1) and over 600 contract instructors (Unit 2). CUPE 4600 has a long history of challenging unilateral administrative prerogatives (see Nelson and Meades, 2013). More recently, the union has had to contend with budgets that have called for increased enrollment without a corollary increase in paid working time or wages. In effect, this translates into both a wage cut and workload increase.

The most recent rounds of bargaining, which spanned from June 2013 to March 2014, offer an avenue for exploring the structural and relational problems that union activists face in the PSE sector when bargaining against precarity. During this round of bargaining, the primary concern for CI's was receiving health benefits, while TA's were focused primarily on attaining fair wage increases and fixed tuition indexation.⁶ Other key concerns for both units included caps on class sizes, Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), and improved sick leave and seniority provisions around leaves of absence. Teaching assistants and contract instructors operate under separate collective agreements, and despite coordinated bargaining efforts, many of their interests are quite different. Despite these differences, non-tenured and non-permanent teaching staff share a common experiences of precarity, along with a desire for enhanced pay, improved treatment and working conditions.

In a January 29, 2014, edition of the undergraduate student newspaper, *The Charlatan* (Armstrong, 2010), Unit-1 member Tabatha Armstrong noted the extent to which the amount of work carried out by

⁶ During the 2008-09 round of collective bargaining, TAs failed to achieve a strong strike mandate, with 49 percent of the membership opposing the possibility of job action. The vote took place in the midst of an ongoing Ottawa transit strike and a prolonged TA strike at York University. The low vote resulted in the loss of fixed tuition indexation, where the tuition rate for TAs was fixed to either 2000 or 2005 levels depending on the commencement of a student's program of study. Fixed indexation was instead replaced with a rolling index, which stabilizes tuition rates to the year that a student begins their program. The effect is multi-tiered student tuitions; for instance, a student who began their studies in 2011-12 pays approximately 6 percent more than a student who began in 2010-11.

TA's is taken for granted, even though "We learn and teach the material, make lesson plans, schedule meetings with students, answer hundreds of emails, and we mark, mark, and mark some more." In the context of ongoing negotiations, CUPE 4600 framed its message to Carleton students the following way: "The working conditions of the people teaching and marking are also your learning conditions, and the way your administration chooses to treat TA's and contract instructors is an example of how they are willing to treat you" (Armstrong, 2014). Teaching and research assistants, as well as some contract instructors, are the only employees at Carleton who have to pay to go to work through user-fees or tuition. As tuition and other compulsory fees continue to steadily rise,⁷ "the quality of education seems to be ever-decreasing because the people who get the most face time with students are overworked and underpaid" (cited in Letson, 2014).

Contract instructors are responsible for teaching nearly one-quarter of the classes taught at Carleton University. While CI's typically have higher educational qualifications compared to TA's, they face equivalent precarity. Lacking health and dental benefits, they earn only around \$6,500 per course, and are "disproportionately responsible for the massive 450 person lectures" in "stadium-style classrooms," aided by "a small army of TAs" (Hurl, 2014). The following is how one Unit 2 member described his experience: "Even though I have three years of teaching under my belt, there are no guarantees I will get another job. If a tenured professor decides they want the course, then I'll be booted. It's especially bad in the summer. The limited number of courses means that you are lucky if you can land a job." (Hurl, 2014). His letter concludes, "In the end, after all this time and investment I have put into something I love, I feel that I deserve a little respect, recognition, and some semblance of security. I'm tired of living a double-life" (ibid).

In an attempt to alleviate some of the negative effects of precariousness on Carleton academic workers, CUPE 4600's negotiating team devised a series of bargaining proposals that for both units proposed improved benefits and a 5 percent pay increase to keep up with rising tuition and costs of

⁷ According to a recent report produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Shaker and Macdonald (2014, 5) note that tuition and other compulsory fees in Canada have almost tripled between 1993-94 and 2014-15, with tuition increasing in Ontario by 239 percent. While a tuition fee increase cap on graduate programs remains stagnant at 5 percent, the authors report that "Ontario's tuition fees have been consistently among the highest in the country since the mid-90s" (17). From a broader perspective, whereas in 1988, 12 percent of university revenue was generated via tuition fees, by 2012 41 percent of revenue was generated through tuition (Fejzic, 2014).

living fees.⁸ However, as a result of having a highly transient workforce, the executive board of the local is constantly struggling in its efforts to mobilize and engage with the rank-and-file membership.

While often guaranteed employment for the duration of their studies, TAs and CIs operate only on four-month contracts. In various ways, the precarity of such working conditions can inhibit the organizing and mobilization efforts ordinarily carried out within the traditional union models. In the following section, we look at several examples of the challenges that were encountered during the 2013-14 year of collective bargaining at Carleton University.

ENGAGING PRECARIOUS WORKERS WITHIN BIG UNION STRUCTURES

A significant challenge facing union locals at present is the need to involve and engage their respective membership in more creative and effective ways (Camfield, 2011). However, precarious workers such as TA's primarily operate on two to four year contracts, the majority of which are two years in duration. These contracts are also dependent on the worker being a tuition-paying student. Because collective bargaining takes place every second year at Carleton University, many of Carleton's TA's rarely see the benefits of the collective agreement that was negotiated during their own employment period. Many CI's work multiple jobs both within and outside of academia. The effect is an overall disconnect between workers and their peers, their physical workplaces, their union representatives, and most importantly, the benefits they will accrue from collective bargaining.

In our experience, it is extremely difficult to build solidarity amongst contract instructors who have likely never met the majority of their colleagues, or TA's who are being asked to fight for a collective agreement that will not impact them directly. Furthermore, because many CI's work for more than one employer, they may benefit from preferable salaries and health agreements outside of their contract with the university. Thus, attempts to engage these individuals in struggles for higher wages and benefits, which may be far less relevant to their needs, introduces yet another set of challenges.

As a result of a bargaining impasse, both the administration and CUPE 4600 filed for conciliation in December 2013. Despite the appointment of

⁸ To contextualize this demand, the average wage increase over three years amongst CUPE locals in the Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC), a voluntary organization consisting of locals in the university sector, was 1.5 percent for 2010, 1.4 percent for 2011, and 2.1 percent for 2012 (Nelson and Meades, 2013, 115).

a Conciliation Officer by the Ministry of Labour, University administration was unwilling to meet the demands of the membership. In particular, the employer's salary proposals remained well below even projected cost of living increases, especially when taking into consideration the rise in tuition costs over the next few years. In the case of Unit 2, the administration regularly refused to substantively discuss the issue of health benefits even though during the last round of bargaining they agreed to enter into discussions on the implementation of health and dental benefits for CI's (CUPE, 4600d). This unwillingness to respond adequately to CI concerns must be contextualized within an environment where Canadian institutions are increasingly using non-tenured teaching faculty as cost-cutting measures, a phenomenon directly related to declining public funding and increases in overall student enrolments (MacDonald, 2013).

PRECARITY AND SOLIDARITY

After bargaining had reached an impasse, we acted as participant-observers in the organizing for a strike vote, which included developing and distributing literature across campus, organizing info sessions for both units and the broader university community and providing updates on bargaining that were disseminated to the membership. From February 11-13, 2014, tables were set out at several locations across campus to inform members and to serve as polling stations. These organizing efforts were met with a strong 82.5 percent in favour of strike action for TAs, and 87.5 percent in favour for contract instructors (News Editors, 2014).⁹ While this result indicated a strong 85 percent in favour of strike action between both units, the low turnout rate of only 44 percent for TA's and 32 percent for CI's reflected the overall disengagement of the membership from the bargaining process. Moreover, under CUPE National's instruction, members who were physically unable to be on campus for the voting process could not be accommodated in time.¹⁰ While voter participation was less than 50 percent, the outcome did constitute an above-average turnout. As bargaining continued throughout February and March, the administration suddenly offered contract

⁹ On February 25, 2014, the union issued a communiqué discussing the outcome of the "strong" strike vote: "At issue for Carleton's academic workers are the links between their working conditions, the value of their contribution to the students' success and the quality of the teaching they provide to students. (CUPE 4600e). .

¹⁰ Our request to CUPE National for a legal opinion around proxy voting came days prior to the scheduled vote. Outside of concerns about potential legal issues, the timing of our request was a factor considered against advanced polling and proxy voting.

instructors much of what they were asking for, including a substantial health benefits package.

The move had the potential of seriously dividing the local. For CI's, the proposed collective agreement accommodated the expressed interests of the Unit 2 membership. But while the TA unit had proposed zero percent wage increase for three years in order to achieve fixed indexation, the bargaining team was told that the administration would not consider indexation, and that no amount of time spent on strike would change their minds. Faced with a satisfied Unit 2 bargaining team, the TA unit had to accept that tuition indexation would not likely impact many outgoing members, making it difficult to justify strike action to a large portion of the membership. The bargaining team was forced to accept a collective agreement that did include a small wage increase and no concessions.

With the support of the majority of CI's, a strike would have proven far less effective, as many lectures and tutorials would continue to operate in spite of the work stoppage. Neither unit went on strike, although the university administration was ultimately able to leverage a minimalist agreement for TA's by providing substantial gains for contract instructors. When the details of the collective agreements were presented to the membership, they were met with little resistance from CI's. However a vocal group of TA's criticized the agreement for dropping the issue of tuition indexation wherein a TAs tuition level is linked to the first year that they commence work (CUPE 4600b, 2014). In the lead up to the ratification vote, several teaching assistants even circulated emails advocating against the ratification of the TA collective agreement. However, both collective agreements were eventually ratified with 76.4 Percent of Unit 1 TAs and 86.2 percent of contract instructors in favour.

These organizational problems are reflective of the broader structural barriers that unions may face when representing precarious workers. As will be discussed in the section that follows, the policies of CUPE National are based on traditional employment relationships that are often stable and full-time, and which can also run counter to the interests of the precariously employed.

(UN)ORGANIZING RESIDENCE FELLOWS

The Executive Board of CUPE 4600 was contacted by a group of non-unionized Residence Fellows in the months leading up to the local's strike vote and preparations. As the first point of contact for all disturbances in residence, these workers are constantly on-call, and are

amongst “the most overworked and precariously employed on a university campus” expected to perform multiple roles as “leaders, administrator, facilitator, and educator” (Lefebvre, 2013a). Citing a rise in health and safety concerns – including active intimidation, harassment, verbal threats, and cyberbullying (Lefebvre, 2013b) - the group was frustrated that they were consistently being ignored when voicing their complaints to the university administration. While residence fellows, much like TA’s, have their pay directly allocated to student-associated costs, ever-rising residence fees has meant that fellows do not receive, as do the majority of TAs, a traditional employer-employee paycheque.

It was proposed in November 2013 that Residence Fellows would enter CUPE 4600 as a third bargaining unit. After discussions with CUPE National, this process began. Residence Fellow organizers were provided membership cards for the 36 workers on staff and quickly had more than 50 percent of them signed. After submitting the cards to CUPE National on November 25, a week later they were informed by CUPE that it would not support the union drive. Three primary reasons for retracting the initial decision were provided. First, residence fellow contracts were too short to meaningfully organize members; second, their capacity to pay dues was insufficient (despite a pre-approved structure with CUPE 4600), and third; as Canada’s largest union, CUPE national would “not be able to make a big difference” for them (RML, 2013a).

The fellows had taken on significant risks, and the decision led ultimately to the resignation of the primary organizers for fear of continued health and safety concerns, as well as employer pressure to resign, face isolating working conditions and other forms of potential retaliation (Lefebvre, 2013ab; Hendry, 2014). Nearly two weeks later, however, national representatives met with residence fellow organizers and CUPE 4600 board members to explain the decision. At the time, CUPE 4600 member, Priscillia Lefebvre (2013b), explained:

“The needs of young workers are becoming increasingly important if the current labour movement is going to be effective in protecting the right to organize in the workplace. However, the perception of unions as untrustworthy and ineffectual bureaucratized institutions serves as a barrier to many young workers who are hesitant to get involved. Unfortunately, the recent actions of CUPE National only serves to further reinforce this cynicism.”

Likewise, in an interview given with *Rabble.ca*, the President of CUPE 4600, James Meades, argued that the move was contrary to the values of “a union that is committing more resources and support to organizing unorganized workers, there was supposed to be a focus on workers that are in precarious positions and there was supposed to be a focus on young workers” (cited in Watson, 2013b). In other words, a successful organizing drive would have provided an important opportunity to engage in new or ongoing attempts to organize not only traditional, more stable workplaces, but contemporary new and precarious ones as well.

After a public backlash inclusive of several media articles and a public online petition condoning CUPE Nationals revoked support (Lefebvre, 2013ab; RML, 2013a; Dehaas, 2014), on January 16, 2014, CUPE National President, Paul Moist, met with residence organizers and CUPE 4600 board members to personally apologize, and assign responsibility for the mix-up to a breakdown in communication that led union officials to believe that membership cards had not yet been signed at the point that support was revoked. CUPE National also formally supported a unionization drive, led by the now-unemployed organizers (Watson, 2014).

Despite CUPE National's renewed support, however, efforts to unionize the Carleton residence fellows were ultimately unsuccessful. Falling just short of 50 percent in favour, the remaining Residence Fellows chose not to unionize with CUPE 4600. The ordeal had pulled away the attention of some members of the Executive Board and the bargaining team. Although the objective was to add a third unit to our local during the bargaining process, thereby increasing our capacity for collective action and leverage at the table, the organizing drive had the opposite effect of portraying to the university administration the picture of a weakened and dysfunctional union.

The actions of CUPE National resonated more broadly with disapproving labour activists across the province, who called into question the ability of contemporary unions to represent precarious workers (RML, 2013a). On December 30, 2013, Rebuilding Militant Labour (RML) issued an open letter addressed to Moist, which points specifically to increasing precarity as a major grievance among young CUPE workers. It reads,

“This action not only dismantled the diligent and extremely effective organizing efforts of these young workers, but has also resulted in

the loss of jobs and housing for those involved in the union drive. The blatant disregard for the vulnerability of these precarious workers has had a massive and devastating impact on the organizers involved. Rather than “standing up for fairness,” this decision serves to effectively disenfranchise all those who occupy vulnerable positions across Canada.”

RML describes itself as “an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial network, which seeks to ally with all the just struggles of the working-class and peoples in Canada against our common enemy, the enemy of capitalism” (RMLa, 2013). RML emerged out of the 50th CUPE National Convention in October 2013 by rank-and-file delegates frustrated with the electoral politics of the union, and its perceived inability to strategically defend workers by defeating the neoliberal austerity agenda (da Silva, 2013).¹¹

REBUILDING MILITANT LABOUR IN THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR

Rebuilding Militant Labour (RML), with its heightened emphasis on the plight of precarious workers, provides an important opportunity for academic workers and their union activists to help orient their political activities towards “a comprehensive fight against colonialism and racism, patriarchy and the exploitation of women,” in addition to a renewed struggle against class-based forms of oppression (RML, 2013b). We have argued throughout that while TA’s, CI’s and Residence Fellows may operate under separate (or nonexistent) collective agreements, possess different educational qualifications and occupy different financial situations or institutional positions, they nonetheless share working conditions that lack “the security or benefits enjoyed in more traditional relationships,” and are thereby becoming more and more part of the precarious “new normal” in our postsecondary workplaces (Lewchuk et al., 2013).

But if rising precarity is part and parcel of contemporary forms of proletarianization this is because the logic induced by an unequal class system implies that the appropriation of surplus value is the means by which capital is accumulated. Precarious faculty are undeniably

¹¹ Lydia Dobson challenged CUPE National President Paul Moist from the floor during the election portion of the Convention receiving a substantial 21 percent of the overall vote, despite lacking the support of the CUPE Young Workers Caucus (da Silva, 2013; Watson, 2013a).

constitutive of the broader working class to the extent they are the mere owners of their labour power; and at Carleton, TA's, CI's and Residence Fellows consistently perform a litany of activities in which they are not compensated for their time and effort. While it is certainly the case that public sector workers do not create exchange value for the capitalist system by producing marketable products, they nonetheless are exploited to the extent that their work can be characterized by the extraction of unpaid surplus labour. They are enumerated, in other words, for their socially determined reproduction costs, not for the entire expenditure of their labour time (Finger, 2011, 53-54).

It is therefore necessary for a unified class resistance on the part of workers and students to provide the potential for labour activists working in solidarity in the PSE sector to move beyond those union models and structures that are less and less capable of addressing the emerging needs of precarious, temporary and casualized workers. Their resistance may involve participation in something like RML, student-worker alliances,¹² coalitions and solidarity pacts with non-CUPE academic locals.¹³ Trade unions, in this regard, can draw on some of the organizing models that led to the 2012 general strike by students in Quebec. For workers, students and activists, our collective struggle against austerity must involve not only organizing to strike, but fighting to win (see Savard and Charaoui, 2012). Other potential avenues include campus-specific coalitions (such as Campus United at Carleton University) or General Assemblies, comprised of like-minded individuals, union members and representatives of progressive associations that mobilize together in areas of common interest.

Effective resistance may also necessitate, to some extent, bypassing large bureaucratic union structures in order for academic locals to work with CUPE District Councils to develop rapid responses to mobilize immediate support for locals with precarious members facing difficult bargaining situations or much-needed public service cuts – community

¹² An interesting development in this regard is the involvement of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) in partnering with Unifor to organize a Good Jobs Summit at Ryerson University from October 3-5. Like many workers, students are impacted by “high unemployment rates, unpaid internships, and a precarious job market.” Student-worker solidarity, in this sense, means recognizing that that these local forms of solidarity on university campuses are based in “the knowledge that firstly, students *are* workers, and secondly, we are stronger united” (Ponting, 2014).

¹³ At the provincial level, an interesting example of this sort of network is the Ontario University and College Coalition, formed in early 2010 to unite different unions (including CUPE), as well as student, staff and faculty associations, in the fight to preserve high-quality, accessible and affordable postsecondary education. See <http://ontariouniversitycoalition.ca/section/1>.

unionism. Recognizing that precarity affects both public and private sector workers alike, Councils could undertake grassroots organizing initiatives in support of other precarious workers in the services, hospitality and retail sectors. Such proposals fall neatly in line with CUPE's commitment to work with labour allies, coalitions, students, and community partners to engage the public on the need to preserve public services and jobs against privatization and precarity.

In the struggle against precarity, the stakes are high. Public institutions such as universities are increasingly under siege: "The verdant campuses of many of our universities bespeak peace and stability. Don't be fooled! You are actually looking at a battlefield. The universities are under deadly siege, in a crusade led by neoliberal financial and corporate leaders (backed by their hired think tanks), and with the willing connivance of our governments" (Valleau and Hamel, 2013). The way in which postsecondary education is predominantly viewed must be challenged: the university is a public good, not simply an individual privilege or a commodity to be purchased for someone else's profit.

CONCLUSION

In large union structures there exists any number of cleavages that interfere with organizing efforts directed at precarious workers. Nonetheless, the institutional structures and memories that CUPE 4600 had in place, along with the resources provided by CUPE National, did in many ways prove effective in connecting these divisions during the mobilization and negotiation periods of the bargaining process. For instance, in the week preceding a possible strike, a solidarity rally and march throughout campus was organized, which was well-attended by campus unionists, other members of CUPE locals and leaders in the broader labour movement.

In the post-settlement period, in the months leading up to the 2014 CUPE Ontario Convention, CUPE 4600 submitted three resolutions that addressed rising precarious employment in the university sector, and which called for the funding of a research project examining the impact of precarious employment on post-secondary education in Ontario; the launch of a public awareness campaign that links precarious employment in universities to rising tuition rates, student debt levels and growing class sizes; and a significant expansion of CUPE Ontario's organizing activities in order to "grow the base of our Union and enable precarious

and non-unionized workers to benefit from Union membership.”¹⁴ It is hoped that the incoming CUPE Ontario executive board members seriously consider the extent to which these resolutions may provide a potential first step in bridging the expanding disconnect between the discourse to advance the struggles of precarious workers, and the resources, political commitment and organizational restructuring necessary for achieving concrete gains in workplaces and within local communities.

While traditional union structures provide a foundation from which to build labour activism and engagement, in many ways they have proven incapable of accommodating the growing precarity of organized labour in employment sectors such as PSE. In future mobilizing efforts, it is essential that alternative models be considered in order to mitigate the negative effects of precarious work. This means seeking out innovative organizing strategies that nonetheless remain situated in a broader politics of resistance that emphasizes the reality of class struggle.

In the context of this ongoing neoliberal assault on PSE, students and workers across campuses must recapture and revitalize a militant commitment to class-based forms of struggle, if they hope to capture and secure tangible gains on a university battlefield that already favours the interests of corporate leaders and corporate-minded administrators. While class has always embodied different manifestations of insecurity and precarity in different historical contexts, the strategic necessity of uniting the dispossessed in struggles that can realize a more equitable social order, remains highly relevant to contemporary struggles against precarious working conditions on university campuses.

¹⁴ The resolutions are in the possession of the authors, along with various other members of CUPE 4600's executive board.

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Neoliberalism, Its Effects on Saskatchewan, and a Teacher Educator's Response

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ABSTRACT: The biggest threat to civil society in Canada and the United States is the economic doctrine known as neoliberalism. Sometimes referred to as the corporate agenda, neoliberalism supports the deregulation of industry, privatization of the commons, the weakening of workers' rights, and corporate tax cuts. It first gained acceptance in Canada and the United States during the 1980s, and ever since has had deleterious effects on public services and assets in both countries. The paper asks whether neoliberalism represents a class war waged by the corporate sector and economic elites on the working and middle classes. The province of Saskatchewan in central Canada is used as a case study. The birthplace of public healthcare in Canada, Saskatchewan appears to have experienced a sea change in terms of its dominant political ideology. Indeed, provincial governments across the political spectrum have eschewed the collectivist nature inherent in Saskatchewan's history in favour of adopting neoliberal economic policy. The paper argues whether social democracy is strong enough to withstand neoliberalism. There is a focus on the effects of neoliberalism on the province's public school system, and also a brief discussion of Idle No More, one of the largest Indigenous mass movements in recent history, that first arose in Saskatchewan to resist the federal government's deregulation of Canada's rivers and lakes. Acknowledging that teaching is a political act, the second part of this paper describes pedagogy designed to lift the hegemonic veil for students. This pedagogy uses ideology critique, critical media literacy, and the re-framing of hegemonic neoliberal discourses with progressive discourses.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberalism, Social Democracy, Saskatchewan, Critical Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Saskatchewan is one of three prairie provinces in western Canada. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, it has been governed by socialist and social democratic parties (Blakeney, 2008; Warnock, 2004). Perhaps best known as the birthplace of the first publicly funded healthcare system in North America, Saskatchewan also has a strong ethos of public ownership of various industries. The province's progressive roots, however, seem to be withering in an era in which corporate power is becoming firmly entrenched in the body politic. As in other parts of Canada, Saskatchewan first began to embrace this corporate agenda in the 1980s under a Progressive Conservative government. Despite the social democratic Saskatchewan New Democratic Party (NDP) forming government from 1991 to 2007, corporate power grew during this period. In fact, it could be argued that Saskatchewan evolved from its socialist roots in the 1940s and 1950s into a social democratic province in the 1970s, but since then has been embracing the corporate agenda known as neoliberalism.

This paper discusses whether social democracy is too weak an ideology to counter neoliberalism. It briefly describes major tenets of neoliberalism, followed by a discussion of protest politics and social movements. Following a discussion of class warfare today in Canada and the United States, I then turn to a case study of the Saskatchewan experience since the 1980s. I argue that this prairie province is not just experiencing a neoliberal assault, but that for far longer it has been the site for a continuing colonial project exacerbated by neoliberalism. Notwithstanding this, I conclude with a note of optimism with pedagogical suggestions designed to foster political consciousness in future teachers. The stance the article takes is that in order to effectively challenge neoliberalism, citizens must have a political consciousness. The first step, therefore, is to understand what is meant by neoliberalism.

NEOLIBERALISM: LAISSEZ-FAIRE ECONOMICS REVISITED?

Neoliberalism is the term used to describe economic and public policy based on a powerful discursive formation with the aim of entrenching the corporate agenda throughout society. As Gerry Caplan (2012) notes:

“[E]verything that’s happened in the past several years has gone to further empower and enrich the 1 per cent (or maybe the 5 per cent) at the expense of the rest of us. Look anywhere you want. What else

does the universal demand for austerity programs mean? What else does the sudden concerted attack on public sector workers mean? What else does the intransigent line taken by multinational corporations against their unions mean? What else does the demand for “right-to-work” laws mean? What else does the widespread attack on seniors’ pensions mean?”

Citizens in both countries have been inundated with a “permanent campaign of persuasion” to win support for the economic policies favoured by neoliberals and politicians willing to implement them (Kozolanka, 2007, 7). Of course social values are also affected, but economic and political policy is the main focus of neoliberalism (Albo and Fanelli, 2014).

The “liberal” part of neoliberalism refers to its association with the economics of classical liberalism in opposition to the social liberal and state liberal orthodoxies of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Both liberal and conservative governments across the U.S. and Canada have passed pro-corporate or neoliberal legislation while touting the free market discourse on domestic and international fronts. Indeed, some provincial social democratic governments, too, have supported neoliberal policies.

Neoliberalism has elicited various definitions from academics since the 1970s when the first attempt at implementation into a nation’s economic policy took place in Chile (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009). It has been described as a broad set of macroeconomic policies, as a pro-corporate worldview, and as an approach to public policy leading to the commodification of the commons. For the purpose of explaining this current stage of capitalism to prospective high school teachers of history and social studies, I focus on the following key components of the neoliberal agenda on the domestic front: the deregulation of private industry, increased regulation of the public sector, tax cuts (especially for corporations and the wealthy), privatization of the commons, and the weakening of collective bargaining rights for workers. The major theorists of neoliberalism are Friedrich von Hayek (1944) and, more recently, Milton Friedman (2002).

In high school social studies and history courses, students learn that income inequality, inhumane working conditions and the lack of social safety nets were features of pre-Keynesian (or pre-WWII) government policies. Government regulations on industry were seen as impediments to financial profit for the capitalist class, and were therefore

unacceptable. Through the eighteenth to early-twentieth centuries, supporters of this doctrine preferred the ‘invisible hand’ of the market to influence economic arrangements and were hostile to the state intervening in economic affairs, especially around regulation of industry. Despite the fact that laissez-faire economics has been largely discredited, it is clear that similar thinking continues to permeate the thinking of many economic and political elites today (Albo and Fanelli, 2014). Yet, contemporary social class issues are virtually ignored in high school today (Orlowski, 2011a).

One particularly effective discourse emanating out of corporate propagandists is the well-known trickle-down theory, that neoliberalism will help everyone no matter their social and economic standing – the deregulated economy will create a rising tide and all of the boats, big and small, will rise with it (Harvey, 2005). Another current powerful discourse in support of corporate tax cuts touts corporations as job creators. Research in Canada and the United States, however, demonstrates that large corporations do not use money from tax cuts to create more jobs; rather, they tend to hoard this money or pay dividends to shareholders (Stanford, 2011; Hungerford, 2012). Despite these findings, the job creator discourse is very powerful and works to gain the public’s support for corporate tax cuts. This is clearly the case in Saskatchewan today (McGrane, 2011).

Under the banner of fiscal responsibility, neoliberal supporters in government, the private sector and in the media have been calling for opportunities to profit from privatizing the commons. Indeed, the “politics of austerity...encourage the “total privatization of the public sector” (Albo and Fanelli, 2014, 14). In Canada, entrepreneurial forces are pushing for the creation of a two-tiered healthcare system to replace its treasured, however much-maligned, universal public healthcare system. Most provinces are tacking on “Medical Services Plan” fees to erode universality. Pension plans for public sector workers and the general public are also very much in peril (Kennedy and Press, 2012). The reason given is that it is no longer affordable to fund these public institutions and programs through taxes. Much of the public seems to be understandably confused over the replacement of the social welfare state with discourses of “personal responsibility and individual culpability” (Albo and Fanelli, 2014, 9). Moreover, these deficit discourses are being trumpeted during a period in which the gap in income inequality between the rich and the poor is widening dramatically to proportions not seen since the 1930s (Frank, 2012; Albo, Gindin and Panitch, 2010).

Electoral politics does not seem capable of stopping neoliberalism from dismantling the remaining vestiges of public services and assets.

DEMOCRACY ENACTED THROUGH PROTEST

Albo and Fanelli (2014, 26) contend: "Neoliberalism reinforces the inequalities of social class and the differentiated dependence on markets at the expense....of the egalitarian and developmental processes of democracy." The neoliberal impulse is to reduce our democratic traditions to the procedural democracy of formal elections. Indeed, with the possible exception of the Nordic countries, it appears that social democratic parties have joined their conservative and liberal counterparts in accepting the main tenets of neoliberalism (Albo, Gindin and Panitch, 2010). With an economic convergence among political parties in Canada and the United States, it is little wonder that popular voting in elections have for the most part been on a steady decline since the 1980s. This does not totally translate, however, to the acceptance of neoliberal values promoted by economic and political elites. Democratic avenues for expressing counterhegemonic views still exist.

Amidst countless stories in the United States of home foreclosures, job losses, and increased poverty during the summer of 2011, Occupy Wall Street arose to challenge the growing wealth gap: "We are the 99%" became the slogan of this social movement, the first serious populist resistance to the neoliberal agenda in North America. Likewise, in any European nation where austerity is being touted by the government, massive protests have filled the streets of urban centres. In the spring of 2012, moments after the Quebec government announced university tuition hikes, huge student protests appeared that were so relentless that they helped force a change in government (Giroux, 2012).

In the autumn of 2012, another social movement arose out of Saskatchewan as Indigenous activists reached out to non-Indigenous Canadians in a show of solidarity to challenge corporate hegemony, environmental degradation and the weakening of democracy (Dobbin, 2013). The flashpoint for the Idle No More movement was the federal government's two omnibus budget bills, C-38 and C-45, which effectively gutted the regulation of Canada's lakes and rivers. The Idle No More movement continues to attract support across the world as progressive and concerned citizens join with Indigenous peoples (Kin-nda-nilmi Collective, 2014; Georgetti and Barlow, 2013). Indeed, since 2006 there has been a significant increase across the world in citizen protest in favour of increased human rights, economic justice and global justice,

and against the failure of political representation (Ortiz, Burke, Berrada and Cortes, 2013).

To counter these democratic expressions of civil disobedience, however, neoliberalism is focusing more and more on disciplining dissent (Albo and Fanelli, 2014). Technological advances have made surveillance a normal part of government activity. And as anyone attending neoliberal events such as the 2010 G20 meetings in Toronto can attest, the state has readily utilized authoritarian measures to crack down on these albeit unevenly accepted avenues of democratic expression.

Despite the state response to dissent, however, it is important for students to note that the creation of the social welfare state was helped through the protests of the 1920s and 1930s. Activist trade unions in Canada and the United States were essential to the gradual acceptance of Keynesian economic policy into the body politic and the social fabric of both nations after the Second World War. The conflicts of the past provide inspiration to resist corporate hegemony today. This is crucial because since the 1980s economic elites have waged a vicious attack on the social welfare state.

IS THIS WHAT CLASS WARFARE LOOKS LIKE?

The term class warfare means different things to different people. It is a provocative phrase that elicits anger from both the right and the left. I will not suggest a definitive definition for class warfare. Rather, the debates about what is occurring in Canada is instructive. When one considers the dramatically increasing gaps in wealth, there can be little doubt that neoliberalism is indeed “a project aimed at the restoration of class power” (Anijar and Gabbard, 2009, 45–46). Harvey (2005, 202) states that “if it looks like class struggle and acts like class war then we have to name it unashamedly for what it is.”

Although it is difficult to prove that the extreme rise in wealth inequality since the 1980s is the result of neoliberalism, it is clear that the two occurred simultaneously. A look at specific neoliberal policies over the past three decades leads one to at least inquire about causality. During the 1980s, Reagan Republicans began touting deregulation as a way for the economy to flourish (Krugman, 2009; Laxer, 1999; McQuaig, 1998). This was instrumental for the neoliberal agenda to gain traction in the American economy. Today, it is clear that the savings and loans scandal of the 1980s and the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007-08 are directly related to the deregulation of the financial industry (Frank, 2012). Of course, deregulation was also responsible for the 2010 British Petroleum

Horizon explosion in the Gulf of Mexico that resulted in eleven worker deaths and the largest oil spill in the history of the oil industry with two-hundred gallons of crude oil spilling into the Gulf every day for eighty-seven straight days (Orlowski, 2011b). In Canada, deregulation of the private sector has resulted in too many catastrophes. To name but a few recent examples: the 2013 Lac Megantic train explosion that resulted in forty-seven deaths (Campbell, 2013); the E. Coli outbreak at XL Foods in Alberta in 2012; and in Toronto, the 2008 Maple Leaf Foods listeriosis tragedy that resulted in twenty deaths (Rouseau, 2013).

In *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising*, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011) reports that the United States has the fourth-highest inequality level in the OECD, after Chile, Mexico and Turkey. Moreover, the average income of the top 10 percent of Americans was \$114,000, nearly 15 times higher than that of the bottom 10 percent, whose average income was \$7,800. By comparison, the ratio was 10 to 1 in the mid 1980s, and 12 to 1 in the mid 1990s. Keeping in mind that neoliberalism began to gain traction in the U.S. during the Reagan presidency of the 1980s, it is clear from the OECD numbers that there is a strong connection between a rising wealth gap and neoliberalism policy. Moreover, in 2009, nearly 44 million Americans were living in poverty, which was four million more than the previous year (Herbert, 2011). In terms of child poverty, 23 percent of American children live in poverty, which is barely better than the situation in Romania (Monsebraaten, 2012). The growing inequality trend is similar in Canada. UNICEF reports that Canada ranks twenty-fourth out of thirty-five industrialized nations with a child poverty rate of 13.3 percent.

Another feature of neoliberalism pertains to work stoppages and the attack on unions. Recent American statistics attest to the increase in employee lockouts: "The number of strikes has declined to just one-sixth the annual level of two decades ago ... [l]ockouts, on the other hand, have grown to represent a record percentage of the nation's work stoppages" (Greenhouse, 2012). There is growing evidence that this strategy is gaining further traction in Canada as well. The day after Michigan passed a "so-called right-to-work law aimed at weakening unions in that state," the Canadian federal government passed Bill C-377 in the House of Commons (Walkom, 2012). This new law was "designed to tie the unions up in red tape and – its backers hope – embarrass labour's leadership" (Walkom, 2012). Bill C-377, while temporarily halted due to the prorogation of Parliament in 2013, was reintroduced in the House

of Commons in September 2014 and aims to impart a host of new financial reporting practices on unions as part of its generalized attack against organized labour (Stanford, 2014). Indeed, Canadian workers have learned that “[a]cross the 1990s, the employment relationship was re-worked to expose workers more forcefully to ‘market forces’” (Albo and Fanelli, 2014, 11). The Fordist arrangement between labour and capital has been torn asunder.

Another plank in the neoliberal arsenal involves the commons. The current trend toward austerity is most often a precursor to privatizing components of the public sector. Indeed, privatization of the public sector is “enforced by a ‘disciplinary democracy’ that ever more deploys anti-democratic measures that marginalizes, and even criminalizes, dissent in defense of austerity and market freedoms” (Albo and Fanelli, 2014, 7). The display of extreme force used by the security apparatuses of the state during the G20 protests in 2010 attests to this. These included CSIS, the RCMP, the OPP, and the military.

Since the 1980s, Canadian and American citizens have been inundated with a set of discourses and legislation designed to further the economic power of the elites. These discourses have evolved into an extremely powerful discursive formation that comprises the underpinnings of neoliberalism: corporate tax cuts, deregulation, privatization, free markets, and union busting. The neoliberal paradigm provides the basis for a rejuvenated class war. Conservative, liberal, and even social democratic governments have supported the dismantling of public services and assets, as well as the weakening of democracy. Saskatchewan, a province that for the most part was built on social democratic principles, is a case in point.

SASKATCHEWAN: A CASE STUDY

“[T]he NDP and the Saskatchewan Party have accepted, to varying degrees, that labour union freedoms are antagonistic to the free market principles they both endorse” (Smith, 2011, 123). The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) first came to power in Saskatchewan in 1944, becoming the first socialist government in North America. This was the first of five straight electoral victories during which time they enacted policies and laws for the general welfare of society at large as opposed to the narrow interests of the captains of industry. Led by Premier Tommy Douglas, some of the CCF’s most notable accomplishments include the first Bill of Rights in North America (1947), the first Arts Board in North America (1948), and the rural electrification program

(1949). In 1961, the CCF evolved into the social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), with closer ties to organized labor (McGrane, 2011; Laxer, 1999; Whitehorn, 1992). Shortly after this, the Saskatchewan NDP passed what many consider to be its crowning achievement: a universal public healthcare system. During the years 1971-1982, the NDP returned to government and, led by Premier Al Blakeney, passed progressive legislation in support of labour and the agricultural sector (Blakeney, 2008). Many crown corporations were created in the energy sectors, telecommunications, car insurance, and the burgeoning potash industry.

In October, 1982, the 11-year rein of the Saskatchewan NDP government came to an end with the election of the Grant Devine Progressive Conservatives (PC). This shift from the NDP to the PCs established the first stages of neoliberalism. During Devine's second term as premier, the PCs sold off some of Saskatchewan's crown corporations, including SaskMinerals and the especially lucrative Potash Corporation. When the PCs broke their election promise not to sell off the public utilities and attempted to sell the natural gas division of SaskPower, the collectivist impulse of the Saskatchewan public was activated (McGrane, 2011). Massive public sentiment against the privatization of SaskPower was so intense that the PCs backed down (Pitsula and Rasmussen, 1990). The Progressive Conservatives reduced spending on social programs, curbed the power of labour unions, and brought in massive tax cuts. In 1991 voters showed their displeasure by returning the NDP to power in a landslide (Pitsula and Rasmussen, 1990).

The Roy Romanow-led NDP governed with a decidedly neoliberal perspective, far removed from the strong social democratic values of the Blakeney-led government of the 1970s (McGrane, 2011; Smith, 2011). Romanow's first term was marked by a massive effort to "eliminate the deficit with the social democratic goal of redistributing wealth and the need to maintain economic competitiveness in an era of globalization" (McGrane, 2011, 95). Although neoliberal policy prescriptions dominated during this first term, the NDP showed some resistance as they raised corporate taxes and introduced a progressive 10 percent deficit surtax on all taxpayers.

Romanow's second and third terms, however, showed a markedly clear move toward attracting business investment simultaneously with social spending cuts. As well, corporate tax cuts and low royalties from resource extraction combined with a regressive sales tax increase (McGrane, 2011). The NDP, long time supporters of the province's trade union movement, did little to help organized labour during the Romanow

years (Smith, 2011). The NDP's desire to be economically competitive with its Alberta neighbor led to the erosion of workers' rights, including erecting barriers to organizing unions in previously non-unionized sectors. By the end of Romanow's tenure as premier in 2001, personal income tax cuts had been added to the NDP financial plan. The strategy of tax cuts continued when Lorne Calvert became premier in 2001, as the governing NDP attempted wealth redistribution through raising the minimum wage and rebates from publicly owned utilities (McGrane, 2011). Despite the decrease in resource royalties and the lowering of "the corporate income tax rate from 17% to 12%" (McGrane, 2011, 102), it was not enough for the NDP to win a fifth term. In 2007, the newly branded Saskatchewan Party formed government in 2007.

In 2007, voters elected a new government under the moniker, the Saskatchewan Party, a coalition of former Conservatives and Liberals. The Saskatchewan Party, led by popular premier Brad Wall, embraced neoliberalism even more than Grant Devine's PC government or the NDP governments of Romanow and Calvert. That said, the collectivist nature of Saskatchewan's political culture has resulted in a slower acceptance of neoliberalism than one might expect (McGrane, 2011).

Based primarily on resource extraction and agriculture, Saskatchewan has been enjoying a period of unprecedented economic prosperity for the past decade or so. Since 2008, 26 percent of Saskatchewan's total government revenue is from non-renewable resources, mostly from potash and oil, which is even slightly more than what Alberta derives from its non-renewable resources (Enoch, 2013). Because of its dependence on external capital and markets, Saskatchewan is increasingly being integrated into continental and global capitalism.

Major problems arise when there is an over-reliance on income for government coffers from resource extraction. The cyclical nature of volatile global commodity prices results in an unstable situation in which governments cannot depend upon this income to adequately fund social programs, public healthcare and public education. Saskatchewan has recently experienced this situation as "resource revenues came in \$563 million lower than was expected in the 2012-13 budget," but it was even worse in 2009 when falling potash prices resulted in a "\$1.8 budget shortfall" (Enoch, 2013). As predicted, the current Saskatchewan government has been reducing its funding for the social welfare state, including public education and higher education (McGrane, 2011).

Rampant extraction of resources is particularly hard on Saskatchewan's Indigenous peoples, many of who still live off the land and

waterways. Indeed, “[f]or land-based people the natural environment is the heart of their economies and their very existence” (Settee, 2011, 74). This has not been a new phenomenon for the province’s Indigenous peoples, however. Settee (2011, 76) sums up this relationship thusly: “In spite of Saskatchewan’s social democratic political tradition that emphasizes egalitarianism, colonialism has been a consistent reality for the province’s Indigenous people.” Clearly, colonial attitudes have informed all of Saskatchewan’s provincial administrations, regardless of political ideology. This is an aspect of the political culture that must be addressed by critical pedagogy.

Although Saskatchewan has now been governed by provincial governments influenced by neoliberalism for some thirty years, the current Saskatchewan government is moving further in its priorities from the province’s social democratic and collectivist roots. Indeed, Saskatchewan is embracing neoliberalism more ambitiously than ever before.

SASKATCHEWAN TODAY: A NEOLIBERAL PROVINCE

Trickle-down economics is clearly not working in Saskatchewan. Despite the newfound prosperity generated by the recent resource boom, the province’s poverty rate of 15.3 percent remains among the highest in Canada (Hunter, Douglas and Pedersen, 2008). Also striking is the fact that this poverty is not distributed evenly across racial lines: excluding people living on reserves, Aboriginal people, who comprise approximately 16 percent of Saskatchewan’s population, are almost four times as likely to be living in poverty than non-Aboriginals (Hunter and Douglas, 2006). This race/class intersection is not only the result of neoliberalism, however. Indeed, it seems to be caused by long entrenched colonial attitudes among the province’s settler population (Settee, 2011)

The situation is especially grim with respect to child poverty. Again, despite record royalties from potash and other resources, Saskatchewan still has the third highest child poverty rate among Canadian provinces (Douglas and Gingrich, 2009). In 2007, the last year for which there are accurate figures, the rate of under 18-year olds living in poverty was 16.7 percent (Douglas and Gingrich, 2009). Child poverty is even more pronounced for Aboriginal families in Saskatchewan as a staggering 45 percent of Aboriginal children live in low-income families, a proportion six times greater than that of non-Aboriginal children. While disadvantage was less pronounced (but still significant) for Metis children at 28.3 percent, an overwhelming 57.9 percent of First Nations children in

Saskatchewan regularly go without some of the basic necessities of life (Douglas and Gingrich, 2009). As race and social class are major determinants of educational achievement as well as future life chances, to be born poor and Aboriginal in Saskatchewan effectively condemns a person to a life of poverty.

The job creator discourse has been particularly effective in normalizing neoliberalism in Saskatchewan. Neoliberal government policy has used this discourse to implement massive corporate tax cuts. As mentioned earlier, since the resource boom hit Saskatchewan in 2007, the corporate tax rate has been reduced from 17 to 12 percent with a further 2 percent cut recently announced (Enoch, 2013). As well, taxes for small businesses in Saskatchewan have recently been cut from 4.5 to 2 percent, and the rate for the wealthiest individuals has been reduced to 15 percent (Enoch, 2013). Almost every provincial budget since 2000 highlights tax cuts as a government priority. (Government of Saskatchewan Budgets, 2013).

This significant revenue shortfall leaves the provincial government with few options. The Saskatchewan government's adherence to neoliberalism is evident in its attempts to make up some of the revenue shortfall by "raiding crown dividends, higher tuition fees, the erratic and haphazard cuts to programs and services and growing public debt" (Enoch, 2013). Moreover, funding cuts have been employed rather than adopting progressive tax strategies and resource royalty rates successful in places like Scandinavia (Moore, 20013).

In 2012, the Saskatchewan government further indicated its support for neoliberalism by launching an attack on labour rights. Bill 85 attempted to make it much easier for employers to claim the work of their employees to be an essential service, thereby negating their collective bargaining rights. This attack, however, suffered a setback when the provincial Court of Queen's Bench sided with the province's unions by declaring the province's essential service legislation unconstitutional (CCPA, 2012). In April 2014, the Saskatchewan government passed a new Saskatchewan Employment Act, which makes union membership more difficult, and gives workers fewer rights and protections. As expected, the province's newspapers hailed the law as a victory in which labour was outsmarted by a conservative government in a "labour war" (Mandryk, 2014).

Another major plank in the Saskatchewan government's neoliberal agenda is its preference to privatize the commons. For example, in the melee caused by the federal Conservative government's omnibus

Bill-C38, the Saskatchewan government moved to privatize 1.77 million acres of community pasture lands (Arbuthnot and Schmutz, 2013). This move also effectively negates environmental regulations of the lands, which is consistent with the province's stance on deregulating industry. Privatization of the commons is also on the table: in October 2014, Premier Brad Wall announced that his government is considering "the idea of allowing private companies to charge people directly for diagnostic medical scans" (French, 2014, A1). This is a major shift away from the publicly-funded Medicare system that first appeared in Saskatchewan in 1962. Equally disturbing, the public school system is also being targeted.

THE NEOLIBERAL ASSAULT ON SASKATCHEWAN'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

A major objective of Canadian social democracy in its ideal form is to protect the commons, especially public education and public healthcare. The Saskatchewan NDP that governed from 1991-2007 was more true to this aspect of social democracy than in other areas. The change in government to the more corporate-friendly Saskatchewan Party has resulted in the province's public school system being particularly vulnerable to the neoliberal threat.

Inadequate funding for Saskatchewan public schools has resulted in a deterioration of learning conditions for all students, but some students more than others. Since 2007 education assistants for special needs students have seen their numbers reduced by 350 full-time positions at the same time that student enrollment has increased by 5,676 and special needs students rose by 764 (CUPE, 2011). The decision to make these cuts during an era of economic prosperity in order to facilitate corporate and personal tax cuts seems particularly mean spirited. At the least, it is ideological. Moreover, in late 2011, the Saskatchewan government announced that it is "committed to funding Associate [Christian] Schools at 80% of the provincial per-student average" (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011).

The most visible manifestation of neoliberal influence in public education is seen in the manner in which the Saskatchewan government has treated the province's normally passive 12,000 teachers. Working without a contract since August 2010, teachers responded to stalled contract negotiations by walking out of the classroom for the first time in Saskatchewan's history for a one-day strike (Graham,

2011). In early 2013, the Saskatchewan government unilaterally increased the number of hours teachers spend in the classroom (French, 2013b). In May 2014, 64 percent of the province's teachers rejected a new contract, demonstrating a degree of militancy rarely seen with this particular group of workers.

The most obvious neoliberal influence, however, involves teacher accountability. In early 2013 the Saskatchewan government announced plans to increase the frequency of these tests to levels beyond anywhere else in Canada (French, 2013a). At a time when most jurisdictions in both Canada and the U.S. are moving from standardized assessment (Orlowski, 2013a), the Saskatchewan Education Ministry stated that by 2016, "students across the province will participate in annual standardized tests, including evaluations of kindergarteners and pre-kindergarteners, readings tests for Grades 1 to 3, and exams in science, math and English for students in grades 4 through 12" (Couture, 2013). Predictably, this led to an outcry from the Saskatoon Teachers Association (French, 2013a). As well, education professors from the province's two universities went public in newspapers, radio and television citing numerous studies to explain why the plan was wrong-headed (See McVittie, 2013; Orlowski, 2013; Spooner and Orlowski, 2013; Malone, 2013). It is noteworthy that in this era of tax cuts and reduced funding for public education, the Saskatchewan government earmarked \$5.9 million annually for this venture.

Given the research, it is particularly telling that the Saskatchewan government plans to spend significant tax dollars to increase the frequency of standardized exams beyond anywhere else in Canada. In fact, most other provinces are moving to a random sampling approach to standardized testing (Spooner and Orlowski, 2013). It is also disconcerting that they are increasing testing at the same time they are reducing funding in other important areas of public education. When resistance to standardized testing strengthened, the Minister of Education called the term itself "too toxic," and proceeded to rebrand this assessment strategy as "common assessment" (Spooner and Orlowski, 2014). This Orwellian wordplay indicates the strength of support the Saskatchewan government has for neoliberalism. The silence of the media on this rebranding is also telling. It should not be surprising to learn that corporate media have corporate interests. By corollary, corporate media is clearly on the side of neoliberalism.

CHALLENGING NEOLIBERALISM IN THE CLASSROOM: TEACHING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

As Apple (2004, 14) notes: “[A]n understanding of how the control of cultural institutions enhances the power of particular classes to control others can provide needed insight into the way the distribution of culture is related to the presence or absence of power in social groups.” When it comes to understanding politics, a significant portion of the population is unable to do so; they are politically uninformed and unaware of how economic power operates. This is likely a reason why neoliberalism has been able to replace the Keynesian model without very much effective resistance. In *Critical Democracy and Education*, Kincheloe (1999, 73) suggests using critical pedagogy so that students become politically conscious: “the curriculum becomes a dynamic of negotiation where students and teachers examine the forces that have shaped them and the society in which they live.” Bearing this important point in mind, the first concept I teach in every social science methods courses to preservice teachers is ideology critique.

Ideology Critique

In order to help students understand the major political ideologies, I first have students categorize issues as either social or economic (see Appendix 1). For example, on the social spectrum minority rights are on the left side, while the conservative pro-life and pro-death penalty positions are on the right. On the economic spectrum, tax cuts are on the right side, while publicly funded social welfare programs are on the left.

In Canada, both conservative ideology and liberal ideology are positioned on the right, although liberalism is slightly to the left of conservatism. In its ideal form social democracy is on the left side of both the social and economic spectrum.

Social democrats and liberals often agree on social issues. In Canada, for example, the federal NDP and the Liberals agree on rights for Aboriginals and LGBTQT people. They usually differ on economic issues, however, as their traditional stances on trade unions and free trade indicate. The social democratic NDP, however, has accepted neoliberalism. This approach allows me to demonstrate the extent to which each of the parties stands in relation to the neoliberal agenda. In this way, students comprehend that neoliberalism is an economic paradigm with significant social and political consequences. In recent years, I include a discussion of democratic socialism, and how it differs from neoliberalism and other ideologies on economic issues. By the end of every course I teach in Teacher Education, the student has at least a basic understanding of

political ideology in relation to various social and economic issues. The next pedagogical step is to emphasize the role of the corporate media as a hegemonic device.

THE CASE FOR CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy can take two basic forms: one looks at the pleasures within a capitalist society and how certain groups are represented; the other looks at politics and the media's role in shaping public opinion. This second approach is the one I focus on, especially around neoliberalism, since it enables the teacher to illuminate the effects of various hegemonic discourses used by the media that portray the poor as lazy, or public sector workers as entitled while ignoring the growing wealth gap. As Herman and Chomsky (1988) point out, the major role of the corporate media is to "manufacture consent," to shape the collective consciousness in ways that further the interests of the elite. This is accomplished not only by *how* issues are covered, but by *which* issues receive coverage.

There are myriad examples of the media ignoring or distorting certain events and policies if there is a perceived threat that the public might turn against the ruling classes. For example, over the past few years there has been a concerted effort in many Western nations to weaken or eliminate altogether pensions plans for public sector workers. Corporate media have virtually ignored the fact that the attack on pensions is occurring across most western nations. Students come to understand this omission as a hegemonic strategy.

Another hegemonic strategy that I use in teacher education involves understanding the power of language. We are living in a time in which bias, or "spin", has been hyperbolized to extreme proportions. As an example of current spin, the tendency to limit workers' collective bargaining rights is not called union busting; rather, the mainstream media and neoliberal politicians refer to it as labour flexibility. Lowering the minimum wage is called right-to-work legislation.

The Orwellian spin strategy has recently been put to good use in Canada. In 2011, the federal Conservative government passed a bill called "Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act" that effectively ended the grain price controls put in place in 1935 through the Canadian Wheat Board. This creates a clear disadvantage for the small wheat and barley farmers. Right on cue, the neoliberal *National Post* ran a headline equating the Wheat Board to an "iron fist" (Gunter, 2011). Students were able to understand how corporate media is a hegemonic device.

A counterhegemonic strategy that I have found successful involves students accessing and assessing media sources. Students demonstrate the degree to which they have become adept at explaining cultural struggles in ideological terms in their "current events" presentations. Each student chooses an article from one of the mainstream newspapers or from an alternative news source such as Rabble.ca, most of which come from the internet. The chosen article must address a cultural issue pertaining to race, class, gender, sexuality, war, or the environment. Each student provides a 2-page written analysis to address issues of bias by showing which groups benefit and which ones lose from the given ideological perspective. They must offer their thoughts about who was quoted and why, and which affected groups were excluded. Each student must also present his or her findings to the class with a four-to-five minute presentation.

Some students choose only articles from mainstream sources, while others willingly, even enthusiastically, search the alternative sources. This has worked well, pedagogically speaking, because students often choose articles on similar topics – climate change and the 2011 Canadian election come to mind – and the ideologies emanating from mainstream and alternative sources are not difficult to discern. For another example, students compared how mainstream news and alternative media outlets differed in their coverage of the Idle No More social movement. Most preservice teachers I recently taught were completely unaware of the role the federal Conservatives' omnibus budget bill had on the rise of Idle No More and its focus on the deregulation of Canada's fresh waterways. Media bias is quite apparent with such pedagogy.

These assignments offer preservice teachers a framework in which to critique the media in terms of the ideological influences of journalists. Through this process, they come to understand how most mainstream media often reflect the views of powerful interests. Indeed, when students challenge the language and the assumptions that many journalists use, they see how the hegemonic function of the media works in the interests of large corporations and other privileged groups. Some students learn to see past the effects of a false political consciousness.

In recent years, I have had students look specifically for neoliberal policy being promoted or challenged by some politicians or business representatives in the corporate media. They look for news articles discussing deregulation, privatizing the commons, unions or tax cuts and analyze the language used. The goal of this exercise is two-fold: first, to demonstrate to students the proliferation of neoliberal policies; and

second, to help them comprehend how language leads many people to believe that work stoppages are most often a result of striking workers rather than lockouts.

Students come to understand that the dominant discourses used in corporate media support the interests of elites over the common good; indeed, they support profits over broad, societal interests. The dominant neoliberal discourses in the corporate media over the course of neoliberalism – tax cuts, deregulation, debt reduction, cuts to social programs and free global markets – have been the building blocks for a resurgence in economic and political power for elites in North America.

RE-FRAMING DISCOURSE

I have recently been engaging in a more sophisticated kind of media literacy, one based on reframing political discourse from different ideological perspectives (Lakoff, 2004). The basic theory behind reframing is to address the observation that people who are strongly influenced by any particular ideology find it difficult to listen to facts that might shake their beliefs. The facts do not seem to matter; the intended listener most often remains entrenched in their belief. Rather than become frustrated, progressive ideologues need to use positive discourses on policy that rely on progressive values and language. In other words, rather than using the familiar frames of neoliberalism, progressives ought to use ones based on social democratic values.

One example from the teacher education program may help to explain the value in reframing. For the neoliberal agenda to continue, significant numbers of poor and working-class people must vote against their own best interests, or not vote at all. The necessary reframing efforts on the part of neoliberal conservatives were successful because a commonly held belief today is that conservative ideas are populist, while liberal or progressive ideas are elitist (Frank, 2012). To counter this, I use a critical pedagogy that has the preservice teachers reframe neoliberal arguments using progressive values. For example, neoliberal politicians often attack any notion of increasing the mandated minimum wage by calling it antithetical to business success. Instead of defending an increase in the minimum wage, one student reframed the debate and focused on the value of prosperity for all who work hard. This is an idea that people across the ideological spectrum could support.

Another student produced a defense of taxes not by buying into the neoliberal frames of tax relief or taxes as burden, but by using a social democratic frame – fair tax reform – which indicates that wealthy people

and corporations should pay their fair share, and that taxes are an investment for the future prosperity of everyone's children. This led to a reframing of a very contentious local issue that recently made headlines far beyond the University of Saskatchewan. The university's Board of Governors was trying to implement a major cost-cutting exercise called TransformUs (Hill and French, 2014a). Some students in my classes, all of whom were recently elected to the College of Education Student Council, quickly organized a large student rally. They reframed the cost-cutting TransformUs to DefendUs and by all accounts, the student action was a catalyst that led to the firing of the University president (Hill and French, 2014b). My students became acutely aware of the role that political agency can have in exacting positive change, and found themselves explaining to the media that the university needs to be adequately funded (see Figure 1).

Of course, media access and media compliance are usually important obstacles to these progressive frames becoming commonly accepted. For now, however, if teachers can comprehend corporate media neoliberal discourses, they should be better able to help their students deconstruct the bias that they are experiencing. After all, a major objective of critical media literacy is to help students interpret the news rather than simply absorb it without reflection. This is a crucial pedagogical strategy to develop a political consciousness in which individuals understand and defend their own best interests.

SOME FINAL REFLECTIONS

Neoliberalism replaced Keynesianism in Canada and the US as the dominant socio-economic and political paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s. The Saskatchewan experience demonstrates that social democracy is not strong enough to withstand these powerful forces to increase corporate profits at any cost. If not social democracy, then effective resistance to neoliberalism is more likely to emanate from a social movement based on democratic socialist values. Compared to other provinces, Saskatchewan is in a unique position for a variety of reasons. Bucking the global trend, its economy is actually growing more than ever before, thanks to the demand for natural resources the province is bestowed with. One trend the province is subscribing to in a major way, however, is its embrace of neoliberalism. Saskatchewan governments ostensibly representing various political ideologies have been adhering to the major tenets of neoliberalism ever more so since the 1980s. These include deregulation of private industry,

the dismantlement of the public sector, corporate tax cuts, privatization of the commons, and the curtailment of free collective bargaining rights for workers.

Neoliberalism has had particularly grave consequences for Saskatchewan's public school system. Tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations mean fewer dollars for the public school system and more private schooling. Moreover, the current attack on the province's teachers and their union is also in keeping with the neoliberal doctrine. Paradoxically, the deregulation of private enterprise is occurring simultaneously with increased teacher accountability. This highlights the insidious discourse of neoliberalism; namely, that private enterprise is to be trusted while the opposite is true of public workers such as teachers.

It is also unconscionable that Saskatchewan's Aboriginal peoples have not been given the same opportunities to benefit from the relatively prosperous economy. The long history of white settler racism toward Aboriginal peoples in the province and elsewhere is still clearly present. Yet, where there is power, there is also resistance. The Idle No More movement is a case in point. This is where hope resides, even in a province that has long held onto colonial values, and seemingly accepted the neoliberal doctrine. Perhaps the citizens of Saskatchewan, including its teachers, are waking up to the fact that public services and assets are not to be taken for granted. In fact, the social democratic drift toward neoliberalism in Saskatchewan might suggest that democratic socialism may be a more viable alternative to the dismantling of oppositional groups, unions and progressive social forces more generally.

APPENDIX A

An effective way for students to understand political ideology is to consider all issues as either economic or social. Economic issues are those that represent significant amounts of money, while social issues do not. For example, capital punishment is a social issue while tax reform is an economic issue. The case can be made that some issues are both social and economic – healthcare is a case in point – yet, to save on getting mired in semantics, the basic economic/social distinction is useful.

With political ideologies and political issues divided into the economic and the social, students are able to make headway around why certain media are called left-wing by some, and the very same

media outlets are called right-wing or right-leaning by others. For example, during the past few federal elections in Canada, leaders of the federal Liberal Party appeal to social democrats (that is, supporters of the New Democratic Party) as having values that have appeared out of the same concerns for justice, and that their vote should switch to the Liberals. The truth of the matter is that on social issues, they are correct. On economic issues, however, the two parties diverge significantly – the Liberals are to the right of center, closer to where the Conservative Party are positioned, while the NDP are to the left of centre. (Note: The point about the Liberal Party being left-wing on social issues and right-wing on economic issues is rarely mentioned in the corporate media.)

Figure 1: Left and Right on the Social and Economic Spectra

Social	
LW	RW
I	I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pro-choice - anti-death penalty - pro minority rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pro-life - pro-death penalty - anti-minority rights

ASSIGNMENT

1. Research the platforms of the following Saskatchewan political parties:
 - The Saskatchewan Party
 - The New Democratic Party

Economic	
LW	RW
I	I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong social welfare state - pro publicly funded universal healthcare - pro-union - wealthy pay tax at a higher rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - anti social welfare state - for profit healthcare - anti-union - tax cuts for all

2. Research the platforms of the following Canadian political parties:
 - The Liberal Party
 - The Conservative Party
 - The New Democratic Party
 - The Bloc Quebecois
 - The Green Party of Canada

3. Use the social scale or the economic scale to place the various political parties.

Be prepared to explain why you placed each one where you did.

- (i) The two main Saskatchewan political parties
- (ii) The five main Canadian federal political parties

Social		
LW		RW
I	I	I
Social Scale		

- (iii) Using a separate set of axes to represent the economic and social scales, place the letter representing each of the following issues on one of the scales. Be prepared to explain why you placed each one where you did.

Economic		
LW		RW
I	I	I

- A – capital punishment
- B – increased rights of gay people
- C – allowing industry to self-regulate
- D – tax cuts for all
- E – increased funding for public education
- F – pro-life (on abortion issue)
- G – pro-choice (on abortion issue)
- H – government regulations of the financial industry
- I – increased military spending

- J – increased social welfare spending
- K – private or 2-tiered healthcare system
- L – subsidized daycare
- M – the Idle No More movement
- N – “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” philosophy
- O – support for unions
- P – banning sex education in schools
- Q – honouring Aboriginal land treaties
- R – support for public transit
- S – progressive tax reform (eg., raising taxes on large corporations)
- T – support for using replacement workers during a strike

Figure 1: College of Education, University of Saskatchewan students protest TransformUs cost-cutting exercise (2014, May 21)



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“Between a Rock and a Hard place”: Negotiating the Neoliberal Regulation of Social Work Practice and Education

Teresa Macías¹

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I reflect on the neoliberalization of social service and educational institutions by using as a departure point a recent province of Alberta Health Services (AHS) Corporate Directive instructing social work schools to implement training on standardized reporting and investigation protocols in cases of “adult abuse and neglect” as a condition for student placement and employment. The neoliberalization of practice, I propose, is articulated through corporate-oriented and professional competency discourses, which together with ongoing processes of restructuring in social work institutions, submit social work to a governmental regime that shapes practice and social workers as neoliberal. The neoliberalization of practice occurs in coordination with similar processes taking place in the university in which professional programs, such as social work, are being constituted and regulated through market-driven educational discourses and the neoliberal re-structuring of the university. The author argues that the neoliberalization of social work practice and education is posing important challenges for educators committed to critical pedagogical projects in social work. These challenges require a commitment to ongoing pedagogical practices that promote and foment critical thinking and commitments to social change situated in the political contingencies of neoliberalism.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberalism, Education, Social Work, Alberta Health Services

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, the province of Alberta Health Services (AHS) issued a “Corporate Directive” (hereafter referred as the Directive) instructing schools of social work wishing to place students in their programs to comply with the education requirements of their “adult abuse and neglect” policy. Under the title *Keeping Everyone Safe*, the Directive aimed at targeting “efforts to increase AHS representatives’ knowledge about patient abuse prevention, awareness and reporting” in order to maintain “safety” as one of AHS’s “core values” (2012a, 1). The Directive indicated that in order for students to be able to do placements and/or be employed in AHS, social work curriculum needed to include information, knowledge and skills related to awareness, prevention and reporting of adult abuse and neglect. Specifically, students had to be trained, not on assessment and counselling – generally associated with social work clinical skills – but rather on standardized reporting protocols, investigation techniques and discipline procedures, as well as on the detection and management of the risk associated with allegations of “patient abuse by AHS representatives.” Social work curriculum, the Directive indicated, was also expected to train social workers in the provincial “internal” and “mandatory” reporting procedures in order to ensure “a standardized approach to business and operating practices” as well as “quality service and cost-efficient operations” (2012a, 1).

The Directive is part of a current trend in Canada and other western countries in which social work practice is being subjected to disciplinary devices. These devices include managerial technologies that minutely regulate practice processes and outcomes, and remove discretion and decision-making powers from the hands of social workers and their clients; changes to budget formulas that reorient social service provisions towards corporate models of cost-effectiveness and efficiency; evidence-based practice models that focus practice towards the achievement of deliverable outcomes; and, entry-level competency profiles that regulate professional registration and licensing, facilitate the labour mobility of social workers and introduce standardized conceptions of practice (Rossiter and Heron, 2011; Aronson and Hemingway, 2011). In this paper I argue that these disciplinary, regulatory and standardizing technologies – of which the Directive is a case in point – are part of a process of transformation that, not only is turning social work into a tool of neoliberalism, but also is producing social work and social workers as neoliberal. Furthermore, the expectations of social service institutions that universities train social workers in standardized, evidence and

competency-based practice models converge with similar processes of neoliberalization underway in higher education. The effect of this is the alignment of social work and social work education with a neoliberal regime whose goal is to squeeze critical practice and educational projects out of social work, and shape social workers and educators to become neoliberal subjects.

I use a Foucaultian notion of governmentality, which I discuss in the first section of the paper, as a useful conceptual tool for charting neoliberalization processes at macro and micro levels in practice and education (Foucault, 2007). A governmentality framework allows us not only to understand neoliberalism as a politico-economic and social system, but also to theorize it as an onto-epistemological project that consistently shapes social environments, social policies, state institutions, and the subject that is captured and lives within these environments, policies and institutions. In the second part of this paper, I discuss the neoliberalization of practice by using the Directive as a starting point to explore how the social work practice discourses it contains, as well as its location within ongoing institutional changes, work to align social work and social workers with a neoliberal governmentality. In the third part of this paper, I make my way from practice to education and describe how instruments such as the Directive and the recently instituted *Entry-Level Competency Profile for Social Workers in Canada* (CCSWR, 2012) find a receptive environment in universities that are themselves also being subjected to processes of neoliberalization. I pay attention to the governmental effects of neoliberalism in the daily work of academics and the effects of neoliberalism for critical social work pedagogical projects. In the concluding section, I explore some of the possible pedagogical, political and ethical commitments that a resistance to neoliberalism necessitates from critical social work educators.

This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of the AHS Directive or of health, welfare or education reform. Nor is the paper intended as a condemnation of adult abuse and neglect policies. Rather, the paper is a reflection of how instruments such as the AHS Directive use discourses of abuse and neglect prevention to sneak neoliberalism into practice and education and subject practitioners and educators to its regulation and discipline. While these kinds of instruments are a manifestation of neoliberal discourses that produce and regulate practice and pedagogical encounters, their power lies in their consistency with institutional reforms underway in social service institutions and in the university.

NEOLIBERALISM AS A GOVERNMENTAL REGIME

In the field of political economy, neoliberalism is generally associated with a western economic model that, since the 1990s, has prompted a wide array of structural social, political and economic reforms. Neoliberalism is responsible for the deregulation of the market, the expansion of financial capitalism, the imposition of free-market economies in the Global South, the submission of the state to the needs of the economy, the advancement of neoconservative agendas, the privileging of corporate interests over community interests, and the reduction of state responsibility for marginalized and vulnerable populations (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Garrett 2010; Mahon, 2008). Neoliberalism leads to welfare reform whereby universal systems of social support and benefits are dismantled to give way to means-tested programs that reduce benefits and increase regulation, police and individual responsibility (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Teghtsoonian, 2009). As a result, Brown (2005, 46) argues, neoliberalism creates a significant rupture in the historical “modest ethical gap” between economy and polity leading to what Wallace and Pease (2011) suggest is the loss of state-centred institutions and the distribution of social theories that install the idea of the moral blindness and impartiality of the market (Bauman, 2000; 2001; Davies and Bansel, 2007; Lemke, 2002; Rose, 1996).

While the impact of neoliberalism on state, economic and social institutions becomes readily observable through a structural institutional analysis, neoliberalism reflects some critical conditions that are not easily explainable through a purely top-down analysis of neoliberalism as repressive power, or as a hegemonic ideology that sustains false consciousness. As Dey (2014) observes, analyses that overemphasize the role of institutions, privilege an understanding of power as purely repressive, or promote a conception of neoliberalism as simply an ideological untruth can make us blind to the multiple ways in which power circulates through social relations, how it produces truth, and how power relations and truth regimes shape the subject. A purely institutional analysis, for example, can result in overlooking an important condition of neoliberalism: its effects in producing subjects that, while suffering the detrimental effects of neoliberal de/regulation, nevertheless internalize neoliberal discourses and use them to understand themselves and others as rational, calculative, enterprising, and individually responsabilized subjects (Brown 2005; Burchell, 1996).

Foucault (2007) proposed governmentality as a conceptual framework to interrogate state power not only in its institutional and political manifestations, but also in its effects at the level of individual life and human relations. As Lemke (2008) indicates, governmentality is part of Foucault's larger preoccupation with the interrelation of power, knowledge and subjectivity and it cannot be divorced from Foucault's concern with the discursive constitution of the subject. Thus, governmentality, Burchell (1996, 20) suggests, refers to a "contact point" between techniques of domination applied through the state apparatus and techniques of the self deployed through subjectivity discourses. Therefore, while not rejecting a structural analysis, governmentality opens an opportunity for conceptualizing neoliberalism as a complexity of social power relations and material elements sustained by truth regimes that reach from the centrality of the state to the very soul of the subject/citizen (Foucault, 2007; Burchell, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Miller and Rose, 2008). Further, a governmental framework uncovers neoliberalism's reliance on the deployment of power-knowledge devices that, rather than describing, produce a reality and the subject who inhabits that reality.

Governmentality allows us to see the onto-epistemological project that is neoliberalism and its efforts to explicitly and specifically produce the social environment and the subject who becomes known, and knows herself, within that environment. Brown (2005, 42) argues that neoliberalism not only defines, but also interpolates the subject to become *homo economicus* who, by adopting neoliberal technologies of self, comes into being through highly prescribed discourses of rationality and calculability that "equate moral responsibility with rational action." As Rose (1999, 152) adds, neoliberalism introduces a market rationality into discourses of subjectivity making it possible for subjects to "translate their activities into financial terms, to seek to maximize productivity... to cut out waste, to restructure activities that [are] not cost-effective, to choose between priorities in terms of their relative costs and benefits, to become more or less like a financial manager of their own professional activities." Through these subject-making discourses, subjects can experience the mutually sustaining technologies of abandonment and regulation that result from neoliberal reform as conditions that foster their personal choice and individual freedom.

A governmental conceptual framework is, therefore, useful for my exploration of the neoliberalization of social work because it allows me to situate documents and policies such as the AHS Directive in the context of ongoing institutional neoliberal changes taking place in

social work institutions and the university. It also makes possible the exploration of these policies as devices that contain, articulate, deploy and distribute neoliberal power-knowledge in order to minutely produce and regulate practice and educational encounters and the subjects that participate in them. As I argue in the next two sections of this paper, the Directive reflects not only neoliberal institutional changes, but also renders practice and practitioners, as well as education and educators explicitly thinkable, knowable and governable in ways that are coherent with the neoliberal regime (Miller and Rose, 1990). I begin the next section with a brief analysis of the AHS Directive in order to render explicit the discourses of practice and professional subjectivity manifested within its text and to situate it within the ongoing institutional neoliberal transformation of social work practice and the neoliberal regulation of social work practitioners.

THE AHS CORPORATE DIRECTIVE AND THE NEOLIBERALIZATION OF PRACTICE

The neoliberalization of social work practice can be observed in the way in which instruments such as the Directive delineate a discursive field of action for social work and produce and organize professional encounters and ideal professional performance. The Directive, for instance, seizes discourses of safety and abuse prevention and binds them to neoliberal practice discourses of calculability, objectivity, risk management and standardization. Practice becomes neoliberal by producing health services as restricted and organized around principles of cost-efficient, standardized approaches to “business and operating practices,” which have as their main objective the calculation and management of risk and the reduction of personal bias through the imposition of standardized practice processes (2012a, 1). Risk management, Parton (1999) suggests, shifts the focus of practice from meeting the needs of service users to the assessment and calculation of cost and liability. Risk, he continues, “gives the impression of calculability and objectivity” (102), concepts that become perfectly logical within neoliberal discourses of cost-benefit calculations that submit social work to the market mentality that, Brown (2005, 40) observes, characterize neoliberalism’s constructive project.

Neoliberal market rationalities are sustained by discourses of practise standardization that reduce risk associated with social workers who either over-step professional boundaries or exercise personalized judgement. Discourses of standardization capture

interpersonal and potentially unpredictable social work relationships within a rationality of objectivity, predictability, calculability and rational action. For example, a literature review prepared by AHS to support the formulation of the Directive (2012b, 4) identifies carefully circumscribed practice and policy approaches with regards to "physical interaction," "same sex" chaperoning, "knock and enter policies," and staff "screening." We see here the careful management of practice encounters in which the bodies of professionals and clients are placed and regulated according to minutely staged practice procedures that can be assessed and calculated according to their capacity to comply with standards of practice. Furthermore, we see the disciplinary work of practice discourses that indicate, for example, that staff screening should "go beyond criminal record checks, and include screening for past interpersonal violence, stress, emotional instability, substance abuse and previous complaints of abuse" (4). Abuse and neglect become the result of individualized actions, errors in judgment, and personal miscalculations and deviance. These conditions can be prevented and eliminated through the imposition of carefully regulated practice standards, and through careful screening and institutional disciplinary actions taking place within the context of a market mentality dominated by market-oriented discourses of cost efficiency.

A significant objective of standardized practice discourses is the elimination of personal and cultural bias by creating apparently objective definitions of abuse manageable through regulated practice. For example, using child abuse literature the literature review mentioned above states that a major obstacle to effective recognition of abuse and neglect is "the [service] provider's *personal and cultural values* (when child-rearing practices are viewed through his/her own set of lenses based on his/her personal upbringing and own set of cultural values) conflicting with legal [and institutional] definitions of abuse" (AHS, 2012b, 3, emphasis added). The solution to this potential conflict is the constitution of standardized and apparently unbiased and objective definitions of abuse and the distribution of this definition – for which it is necessary to recruit the assistance of the university – to each and every practitioner. While personal and cultural bias are produced here as dangerous risk, the neoliberal and historically specific discursive construction of notions of abuse and practice, along with the manner in which these discourses are already embedded in white, middle class and heteronormative values, are disguised under apparently objective legal and institutional definitions.

It is important to restate that it is not the prevention of adult abuse and neglect that I question in this analysis, but rather how such prevention is articulated exclusively in a neoliberal framework of practice. The regulatory, disciplinarian and normalizing bureaucratic processes these practices enact on the populations that are subjected to them, and on social work professionals who enact them, are obscured when standardized, cost-efficient and risk-managerial approaches are unproblematically presented as unbiased and objective solutions to abuse (Drinkwater, 2005; Waldschmidt, 2005). Furthermore, the modest headways that anti-racist, anti-colonial and culturally aware approaches to practice have made in social work become null when cultural values are produced as the cause of abuse and neglect, and practice is subjected to market-driven calculability.

The constitution of social work subjectivities is a critical effect of the neoliberalization of social work. Such constitution is mediated through discourses of self-regulation and competency that effectively produce social workers as policing agents, individually responsible for their own actions and as well as for the regulation and policing of others. For instance, the Directive instructs social workers to adopt behaviours of self-discipline and self-alignment (through the adoption and incorporation of the standard practices already discussed) as well as to engage in the surveillance of others, including potentially abusive and culturally biased colleagues and unscrupulous patients (AHS, 2012a, 3). Visible is the discursive production of the “competent professional” who is skilled in the identification, calculation and elimination of personal bias and the identification of abusive behaviour; knowledgeable and competent in relation to standard reporting and risk reducing protocols; and capable of identifying clients who are lying about abuse experiences. Competency, understood along the lines set up by the Directive, becomes a marker of rationality and prudence that is akin, as Brown (2005, 42) suggests, with neoliberal discourses of subjectivity embedded in “rational deliberation,” “individual responsibility” and risk management. In fact, the calculation, management and individualization of risk in cases of abuse become not simply a matter of social or institutional policy, but come to define the moral behaviour of social workers.

The Directive is embedded within ongoing neoliberalization processes taking place in social work institutions that sustain, and are sustained by, the practice discourses manifested in the Directive. In addition to the welfare reform strategies already mentioned, the social work field is being relentlessly shaped as neoliberal through, for

example, power-knowledge regimes that reconstitute the welfare state as excessively costly both economically and socially in order to justify not only budget cuts and the privatization of care, but also the reconceptualization of funding structures and state responsibility (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004; Garrett 2010). Social workers experience budget cuts and the restructuring of funding programs that shift funding regimes from core-funding to project-based funding (Ogbor, 2001), and from funding concerned with the support of vulnerable populations to funding concerned with enticing, if not forcing, those populations into the labour market (Morrow, Hankivsky and Varcoe, 2004). Social workers are required, within these regimes, to work under conditions of increasing insecurity and vulnerability (Baines, 2006; Smith, 2007). They are also required to negotiate regimes of practice that are increasingly concerned with regulation, surveillance and control of marginalized and vulnerable populations, and with the valorization of human action almost exclusively through discourses of productivity and individual responsabilization and autonomy (Morrow et al., 2004; Pulkingham, Fuller, and Kershaw, 2010; Teghtsoonian, 2009). Women, especially women raising children, the poor, racialized minorities, peoples with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, bear the brunt of these neoliberalizing processes; they experience most concretely the direct effects of a neoliberal regime that criminalizes poverty and need, privatizes responsibility and individualizes the social effects of neoliberalism (Moffatt, 1999; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Melamed, 2006).

Under these conditions, social work becomes not simply a social institution required to negotiate the neoliberal regime. Rather, it is itself shaped as neoliberal through, for example, the submission of practice to managerial policies, corporate discourses of cost-efficiency and evidence-based models that intimately regulate helping relationships (Dominelli, 2009). The recently instituted "entry-level competency profile for social workers in Canada" developed and imposed by the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (2012) is another case in point. The profile summarizes the skills and competencies that social workers in Canada should demonstrate in order to qualify for registration in the professional colleges and for practice in any of the provinces. Disguised within discourses about the need to create high quality standardized systems of practice – practice discourses very much in tune with the Directive – this competency profile combines some of the standardised practice discourses I have already discussed with efforts to submit social work to neoliberal labour discourses of mobility, flexibility, insecurity

and market dependability (Rossiter and Heron, 2011; Aronson and Hemingway, 2011). As is the case with the Directive, the social worker in the competency profile is the worker capable of “skilful” engagement in the management, regulation and standardized discipline of populations. Yet, as is the case with most other examples of how neoliberalism represents itself, these determined social functions of social work are presented as devoid of ideology, as simply the ‘natural’ and most commonsensical way of doing social work, and as a set of de-politicized, rational, objective and evidence-based techniques.

The neoliberalization of social work is also supported by the introduction of technologically mediated reporting, assessment and managerial technologies such as Computer Business Systems (CBS’s), computer databases, and managerial systems that not only capture the work of social workers within complex information technologies, but also dictate the outcome of practice in ways that are removed from the actual interpersonal relationships historically so central to the work of helping (Harris 2003, Wallace and Pease, 2011). As Head (2014, 5) observes in his book on the use of CBS’s in white collar professions and human service work, these systems introduce industrial “regimes of quantification, targeting and control” into decisions regarding how many patients or clients or, in the context of the university, how many students should be processed within a system of work that resembles the industrial production line. The central effect of these technologies is the production of mindless, or, as Head calls them, “dumber” professionals whose practice does not require much more than imputing information and following direction.

Technology mediated assessment and practice tools and their related standardized competency profiles and evidence based practice discourses, in turn, render social work practice, and the professionals and clients in them, permanently visible within managerial regimes concerned with the minute calculation of practice (Morgan and Payne, 2002; Tsui and Cheung, 2004; van Heugten, 2011), and with the shaping of social work along discourses of marketability (O’Connor, 2002). Managerialism, as is the case with computerized practice and assessment technologies, produce social workers not as expert professionals capable of independent thought and judgement, but as workers whose expertise and thinking abilities are not only unnecessary, but also discouraged. Most importantly, managerialism conceptualizes society as market. As Tsui and Cheung (2004, p. 439) argue:

“Managerialism views society as a market with competing interests, not a community with a common goal. In a market, the important

elements are supply, demand and price; not support, dignity and peace. Market value is the ultimate standard for decision making. Managers care about the profit of the enterprise, not the benefit of clients. Their pursuit is market share, not sharing. They work for being well, not for the well-being of others. The spirit of community and the value of society have been shelved and replaced by commercial principle – the maximization of profits.”

Neoliberalism, as deployed through technologies of practice and management, seeks to shape the very subjectivities of social workers and how they think of themselves, their practice and their encounters and relationships with clients. As Garrett (2010, 343) observes, the aim of neoliberalism is to install a “new ‘common sense’” and to ensure that social workers not only “begin to think and act in a manner which is conducive to neoliberalism,” but also experience neoliberal governmentality as something to be freely embraced. “The political and economic aspiration,” continues Garrett, is “to prompt a cultural shift - even, perhaps, to change the soul [of social workers]” (Garrett, 2003). Neoliberalism shows its onto-epistemological character in social work not only in the way in which social work regulates, disciplines and cares or fails to care for certain life, but also in the manner in which it installs power-knowledge regimes that produce desirable conduct and shape both practice and practitioner. Consequently, while authors such as Green (2009) suggest that the management models imposed through neoliberalism interfere with wise or ethical professional action, a governmental analysis allows us to argue that neoliberalism has the capacity to delineate the very notion of morality and ethics and the subject that engages in moral and ethical practice.

THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

The Directive arrived in my email inbox through the General Counsel Office of the university where I taught at the time, attached to a message that clearly and succinctly instructed the school to comply with its expectations “to have specific content on adult abuse and neglect in our curriculum for our students to be able to practice in the Alberta Health Services” (P. Miller, personal communication, June 14, 2012). The Directive generated mixed responses among my colleagues, with some faculty wholeheartedly embracing and actively searching for ways to comply with its expectations, and others expressing not only concern about its contents, but also frustration and incredulity at the audacity of an agency telling us how to do our job. These discussions

reflected long-standing debates taking place in the university over the role and function of education and its relationship to the labour market. In social work, these debates have, for the most part, been characterized by discussions over whether social work education should teach clinical and competency skills or theory and critical thinking skills (Burke, 1996; Moffatt, 2001). Pedagogical approaches that centre the teaching of professional competencies advance the idea that technical knowledge and practices skills prepare practitioners for 'good', objective, transparent and evidence based practice, and reduce the potential of harm to client populations (Cheetham and Chivers, 2005). As Bogo, Mishna, and Regehr (2011, 276), for instance, argue, the teaching of "competence models can provide a transparent blueprint of what students can expect to learn, what teachers will ensure is provided, what practitioners have a responsibility to master, and what consumers and policymakers can expect" from the social work profession.

Conversely, critical approaches to social work education insist on unpacking the social power relations that determine the living conditions of individuals and communities and inform and delimit helping relationships (Baines, 2006; de Montigny, 1995; Fook, 2003; Gilbert & Powell, 2009; Ife, Healy, Spratt, and Solomon, 2004; Lindsay, 1994). In other words, critical social work approaches adhere to a political commitment to considering the social power relations (racism, patriarchy, class inequality, colonialism, heteronormativity, etc.) that inform individual conditions, resisting individualizing conceptions of social problems, and working with individuals and communities towards social change. This commitment is reflected in anti-oppressive, anti-racist, feminist, class conscious, anti-colonial, etc. approaches to social work practice that politicize social problems and seek to create socially conscious, flexible and creative helping relationships. The purpose of critical social work is not simply to graduate readily employable social workers who can blindly follow the rules, but also to produce professionals capable of unpacking normative practice discourses and resisting oppressive social structures.

Furthermore, critical social work turns the analytical gaze towards the profession itself in order to unpack professional complicity in historical and contemporary conditions of injustice and to uncover how the reliance on skills and competency helps to secure hegemonic professional identities. As Jeffery (2005, 411) suggests, within a profession historically charged with the "benevolent treatment of society's marginalized and 'unfortunate' individuals and groups," demands for skills

and competencies are not only unsurprising, but also speak to a deeply embedded professional identity centred on the premise that the capacity to 'skilfully do' social work intimately defines who social workers become (see also Heron 2007; Margolin, 1997). By interrogating the very conception of competency skills and their reliance on what Schick (1998, 277) calls "technical-rational solutions," critical social work interrogates the impetus demonstrated in competency-based training programs to "entrench and privilege a unitary and specific understanding of social work theory, practice, and education" (Campbell, 2011, 311; Campbell and Whitmore, 2004; Fook, 2011; Martinell and Jacobsson, 2012). As Campbell (2011, 312) argues, competency-based educational approaches are grounded on un-examined assumptions that social workers share or should share the same values and ethics and that social work knowledge can be captured within a set of "pre-defined, discrete, measurable tasks." Critical approaches to social work education, therefore, promote learning experiences that not only explore the power relations at work in helping and social workers' complicity in the perpetuations of conditions of social injustice, but also entice students to explore their own motivations to become social workers and to find security in the acquisition of competency skills (Jeffery and Nelson, 2011).

At first sight, competency-based and clinical social work education programs with their focus on teaching technical knowledge appear to be well-equipped to meet the expectations included in the Directive and to impart knowledge that can ensure standardized, cost-efficient practice. Yet, I would argue that neoliberalism is specifically shaping education, including competency-based education, within a market driven rationality that might not be what proponents of competency-based social work education intend. The neoliberalization of social work is sustained not only by the changes in practice I previously discussed, but also by similar processes of neoliberal transformation underway in the university itself that facilitate the unobstructed transition of the Directive and the power-knowledge regimes it contains and advances, from practice to education. Neoliberalizing processes in the university are insidiously shaping higher education, undermining critical pedagogical approaches, including critical social work, while capturing and re-constituting professional and competency-based education as neoliberal (van Heugten, 2011).

Neoliberalism results in concrete structural and material conditions in the university such as, for example, the proletarianization of education through increased numbers of seasonal instructors who labour for low

pay and under insecure working conditions; the introduction of corporate, business oriented approaches to the management, evaluation and regulation of universities and their research and educational agendas; and, the reconstitution of education along consumer-driven, customer service and profit-seeking neoliberal values (Canaan and Shumar, 2008; Church, 2008; Naidoo, 2008). These material and structural conditions are combined with an increased emphasis on profit and the corporatization of the university that require departments to increase registration while confronting budget restrictions and reductions as well as to implement auditing techniques and funding formulas that are dependent on economic impact (Ball, 2012; Shore, 2010).² While economic restructuring and budget cuts are at times presented as the result of crises, discourses of efficiency, streamlining and efficacy attach themselves to crisis discourses and in more insidious ways shape the neoliberal university (Lewis, 2008).

Neoliberalization shapes the nature of university education through the articulation of, for example, discourses of ‘human capital’ and ‘knowledge-based global economy’ that capitalize knowledge and turn education from the pursuit of knowledge into an individualized consumer-driven pursuit for profit (Shore, 2010). “Attached to this sense of schools as producers of ‘human capital,’” argues Apple (2006, 23), “is an equally crucial cultural agenda [that] involves radically changing how we think of ourselves and what the goals of schooling should be.” Along with the reorientation of universities towards international markets, which conjures up old colonial forms of knowledge production and distribution, as Lim, Duggan and Muñoz (2010, 133) argue, “the intensification of professional training as a first priority is also helping to promote profit, entrepreneurial innovation, and university brand names.” This shift becomes perfectly logical for, as Lyotard observes, “the question now asked by the professionalist student, the State or institutions of higher education is no longer ‘Is it true?’ but ‘What use is it?’” (cited in Ahmed, 2012, 84).

Lewis (2008, 46) observes that the neoliberal restructuring of higher education “is not serendipitous. It has been triggered by specific political and economic shifts in ideology that are making a global sweep and catching education up in its wake, not by coincidence but because the

² For example, many universities in Canada have implemented tools such as the “Academic and Administrative Program Reviews.” Informed by the US Dickeson approach, these program reviews are founded on the economic theoretical premise that periods of scarcity and austerity offer the perfect opportunity for ‘refocusing’ and prioritizing funding in educational programs (Dickeson, 2010).

control of education is a significant component of the process." In social work, neoliberalism finds expression in competency-based educational discourses that, as van Heugten (2011) argues, emphasize the standardization of taken-for-granted professional practices. While these professional practices gain dominance, they are themselves being produced as tools for the introduction of economic and neoliberal imperatives into social work education. As Rossiter and Heron (2011, 306) suggest, neoliberalism captures competency-based social work education and shapes it to conform to normative discourses of labour flexibility and market calculability and dependability that "eliminate the intellectual and ethical foundations of the profession in favour of rudderless behaviours." The alignment of the curriculum with neoliberal governmentality serves, as Giroux (2002) observes, to discredit and sacrifice social justice interests, override democratic agendas and regulate intellectual curiosity in favour of producing education as totally dependent on market relations (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001). Therefore, competency-based education becomes, van Heugten (2011, 175) continues, the 'Trojan horse' "via which an emphasis on competency, skills, essentialist ideology, and knowledge for practice in agencies will squeeze critical social science and critical scientists out of the social work academy."

Within the neoliberal university, social work curriculum is expected to produce social workers who can simply follow the neoliberal rules of the game and conduct themselves uncritically within established neoliberal practice models. Education is supposed to train social workers who can apply the neoliberal welfare reform policies already mentioned in ways that have concrete material consequences for peoples and communities with which social workers come into contact (Garrett, 2003, 2010; Lymbery, 2003; Rosenman, 2007). Furthermore, the neoliberalization of social work education results in the technocratization of social work teaching in which professional training becomes about the transference of technical skills and competencies. Through the work of teaching, neoliberalism ultimately produces the academic subject who lives and works in the neoliberal university and who, through the already mentioned processes of regulation, management, and reporting of research and teaching labour, herself is disciplined into becoming a neoliberal subject. As Gill (2010) observes, academic capitalism and the corporate university are insidiously shaping academic work, creating conditions not only for the *intensification* of academic work – through institutional expectations that academics do more with less – but also its *extensification*, understood as the virtual elimination of the academic office walls and the expectations that academic work will be done anywhere

and everywhere. Computer mediated technologies such as Moodle and their application to teaching models such as online teaching, with their accompanying discourses of 'accessibility' and teaching "innovation," play a critical role in insidiously shaping the kind of neoliberal scholars we are required to become. As Gill (2010, Chapter 17, para. 12) continues, a critical analysis of neoliberalism in the university "directs our attention to new and emerging forms of discipline, which operate as technologies of selfhood that bring into being the endless self-monitoring, planning, prioritizing 'responsibilized' subject required by the contemporary university."

In addition to the structural and institutional constraints and discursive shifts previously identified, neoliberalism infiltrates education by informing the kinds of encounters we experience in the classroom. Students, especially those already practicing in the field, come into social work classrooms already experiencing neoliberal regulation and, as a result, their expectations that we teach them competency skills and the standardized practice protocols contained in the Directive are not surprising. Additionally, if we accept that neoliberalism insidiously produces subjectivities, we can see how students come into the classroom already being produced as neoliberal subjects. In my teaching experience, I have several times been confronted with resistance on the part of students to course content, resistance that is expressed in market-driven language that allows students to argue, for example, that the critical thinking skills I teach 'are not what they are paying for,' or that they 'are not getting their money's worth' in the course. This language of the market makes it perfectly logical to question curriculum content that challenges neoliberalism and the historical role of social work and its foundation on race, gender and class conditions of inequality, for example. In neoliberal governmentality, the ideal citizen is the consumer citizen and subjectivity expressed in the language of the market becomes perfectly logical and commonsensical. As Lim et al. (2010, 131) argue, neoliberal "common sense is the water and [students] are the fish."

CONCLUSION

As the title of this paper suggests, neoliberalism is placing critical social work and its pedagogical projects between "a rock and a hard place." We, those committed to critical social work, are being squeezed between relentless processes of neoliberal welfare and institutional restructuring taking place in social and human service institutions, and similar neoliberalization processes taking place in the university. While the detrimental effects of this squeezing experience should not be

underestimated, I would like to suggest that this narrow space between the rocky side of neoliberal practice and the hard place of the neoliberal university constitutes an important vantage point from which to reflect on the political and pedagogical challenges that neoliberalism presents as well as the commitments that teaching against the grain of neoliberalization requires from critical social work educators. In other words, while, as van Heugten (2011) suggests, neoliberalism attempts to squeeze critical social work out of the university, it is within critical social work that we can mount a critique and a political challenge to neoliberalism, critique and challenge that can still take place in the university classroom and within the contours of critical pedagogical projects.

As I have argued in this paper, neoliberalism is more than an economic model; it encompasses a multiplicity of discursive and material conditions that serve the purpose of shaping society, its institutions and the subjects that exists within them. Power-knowledge regimes produce the university as a marketplace in which student-consumers acquire skills and competencies and in which education is defined as responsible for producing "specialized, highly trained workers" that will enable "the nation and its elite workers to compete 'freely' on the global economic stage" (Canaan and Shumar, 2008, 5). Moreover, neoliberalism aligns the university to its social project by constituting it not only as the place where the production of neoliberal knowledge is enticed, but also where that knowledge is deployed through education for the purpose of producing the neoliberal student and future professional. Neoliberalism, in other words, constitutes the university not only as a product of neoliberalism, but also as an instrumental site in which the biopolitical and ontological project of neoliberalism is accomplished. That is, the university becomes an example of what Foucault (1990, 103) called a "dense transfer point for power relations" that have specific effects, not only in the production of knowledge, but also in the constitution of subjectivity.

Nevertheless, the constitution of the neoliberal subject is not a passive process; neither is neoliberalism a complete project. Again, Foucault (1980; 1982; 1995) is helpful here for he argued that power is not a possession but a relationship that flows in a network of social processes in dynamic, always in-flux, and never completed, ways. Neoliberalism and its ontological project, while presenting itself as all encompassing and the only available reality, is in fact a project in the making. I have used 'processes of neoliberalization' and 'neoliberalizing processes' as expressions throughout this paper precisely to call attention to the

ongoing and incomplete project that is neoliberalism. Similarly, subject formation, the ontological constitution of the neoliberal subject, is also a project in the making. As Foucault (1994c, 225) proposed, the constitution of the subject is mediated by power-knowledge regimes, but requires active work on the part of the subject, work that “permit[s] individuals to affect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conducts and ways of being so as to transform themselves” into subjects.

This conception of neoliberalism as a project in the making and the subject as actively implicated in her own constitution opens up important possibilities for a politicized commitment to render neoliberal governmentality and the subject of that governmentality visible and thinkable. That is, critical pedagogical projects can render neoliberalism and the neoliberal subject specifically and politically thinkable. This is a pedagogical commitment to interrogate discourses of practice that, while disguising themselves under the cloak of good practice and even justice, in fact work to sneak neoliberalism into our very sense of being/doing social work. This is also a commitment to render unquestionable realities *questionable* in ways that problematize apparently stable power mechanisms in order to interrogate their making, rationality and apparent coherence (Bay, 2011, 231). In the context of competency discourses and the educational demands of policies such as the Directive, a critical pedagogical project may, for example, not only make us, students and academics, aware of the competencies and practice protocols that are being demanded, but also render visible, questionable, and thinkable the social power relations that produce and sustain these discourses and demands, as well as their location within neoliberalization processes. This interrogation can lead to collaborative and politically strategic processes of resistance as well as to the development of alliances between social workers, educators, communities and clients.

The pedagogical commitment I propose is a commitment to a pedagogy of thinking. Arendt (2003; 2006) in her work on totalitarianism and the Holocaust argued that a central condition of totalitarianism is the constitutions of subjects who are incapable of thought. While some may argue that neoliberalism is not comparable to Nazi totalitarianism, I want to call attention to the increasing totalizing effects of neoliberalism, its historical consolidation as the only viable socio-economic regime after the fall of the Berlin wall and the eastern front, and its progressive distribution in the global context. Furthermore, as I have discussed in this paper, neoliberalism installs systems and technologies of practice, work and

subjectivity that aim at limiting, if not removing, the capacity for critical thought from the actions associated with social work. As Arendt (1978, 4) argued, the imposition of standardized systems of management “have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence.” If we carry Arendt’s work into the realm of teaching, we can argue that in the face of totalizing regimes such as neoliberalism, we need to commit to a pedagogy of constant critical thought. Critical thought, understood as an activity that by its very nature searches for the roots of problems, is fundamentally contrary to the mindless effect of neoliberal governmentality. This commitment to thinking does not adhere to a set of practices, competencies, standards, or codes of conduct that by their mere existence may promote thoughtlessness. Neither is thinking a purely intellectual or elitist endeavour. Rather, a commitment to thinking is a commitment to engage in a constant dialogue with oneself so as to continuously examine social events and our role in them (Assy, 1998).

This commitment to a pedagogical project of thinking means a commitment to thinking *through* and thinking *with*: This is a commitment to thinking through the social conditions and power relations that affect us and surround us in order to render visible the totalizing effects of neoliberalism. This is also a commitment to thinking with others – or at least in the company of others – as a political strategy to undermine the individualizing effects of neoliberalism. This commitment to a thinking pedagogy is fundamentally a commitment to a situated pedagogical project that anchors our thinking in the socio-political realities of our present, a present that becomes the object of thinking as well as of change. Thinking, therefore, is a commitment to remain anchored in the world; it is as an activity that takes place in the world and in the social conditions within which we are being produced and in which we produce ourselves as subjects (Macias, 2012).

In addition to rendering neoliberalism and its effects on practice and education critically and politically thinkable, the commitment to a pedagogy of thinking I propose encompasses a commitment to uncovering, unpacking and, through thinking, disrupting the ontological project of neoliberalism. Freire (2006) argued that education has a fundamental ontological function in creating spaces for the re-imagination of the self. A commitment to thinking in social work education needs to translate, therefore, into pedagogical practices that create spaces in the classroom for politically conscious exercises in the re-imagination of ourselves and/

in the world. I regularly ask my students what would a world outside capitalism and neoliberalism look like. Many times the answers remind me how old I am for many of my students were born after the fall of the Berlin wall, or were too young when the current regime started to assert itself. As a political refugee who is the product of global conflicts in which I was part of, and who participated in movements that were actively imagining a world otherwise, I think that enticing and at times even coercing students to re-imagine other ways of being and doing social work is not just a politically urgent project, but also an ethical demand.

In committing to a constant and vigilant process of critique that looks at how neoliberalism penetrates not only our practice but also our very sense of self, we can potentially, as Foucault suggests, “separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, thinking what we are, do, or think” Such a commitment to thinking in social work can, I hope, open possibilities for meaningful resistance to the neoliberalization of social work education and practice.

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A Critique of the Millennial: A Retreat from and Return to Class

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ABSTRACT: Since the turn of the millennium, millions of people born between the late 1970s and the late 1990s have been categorized as “millennials.” A media discourse tells people what a millennial is and is not, shaping how those people it depicts as “millennial” may perceive themselves and how others perceive them. This paper examines four media representations of the millennial: a member of a youth cohort, a consumer, a worker to be managed, and an immiserated victim of hard times. It argues that these four media representations of the millennial distort the capitalist determinations of millennial life and labour and prevent the millennials from seeing themselves as part of the working class. By way of a critique of these four ideological media representations of the class-less millennial, the paper forwards a historical-materialist account of the millennial working class in a new capitalist millennium.

KEYWORDS: Millennial, Capitalism, Class Analysis, Youth, Media, Ideology

INTRODUCTION: THE MILLENNIAL SIGN AS SITE OF STRUGGLE

Since the turn of the millennium, scholars, journalists and marketing consultants have categorized millions of people born between the late 1970s and the late 1990s as “millennials” (Dorsey, 2014; Pew Research, 2014; Reason-Rupe, 2014; Stein, 2013; Howe and Strauss 2000). Books, news articles, TV clips, websites, documentaries, polls and public conversations add to an already large and growing media discourse on the millennial identity. Everyone from Obama to Nike to Google Analytics has taken part in the “recognition” of the millennial, which is one more identity on a big list of media generated identities that governments,

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corporations and marketing firms use to talk about youth or the “spirit of the age.” Whether championing the millennial as the early twenty-first century’s winner or ridiculing the millennial as its biggest loser, numerous people take part in the construction of this “new” youth identity. Images of and messages about the millennial flow through the media, showing and telling people what a millennial is, and is not, and shaping how those they address as “millennials” may perceive their identities in society.

This paper analyzes four ways that the media represents the millennial identity: a member of a youth cohort, a sovereign consumer, a worker to be managed, and an immiserated victim of hard times. It argues that these four media representations of the millennial distort the capitalist determinations of millennial life and labour and may prevent millennials from seeing themselves as part of the working class. Through a critique of these four media representations of the class-less millennial, I forward a historical-materialist account of the millennial as working class in a new capitalist millennium.

This paper’s analysis of media representations of the millennial identity intervenes in current semiotic and political struggles over the meaning of the millennial in twenty-first century capitalist society. The “millennial” is a sign for an identity that the organic intellectuals, movements and parties of the Left and Right articulate to their projects as they struggle for hegemony (or “moral leadership”) in society (Gramsci, 1971). The Russian linguist Valentin Voloshinov (1973) conceptualized words as “signs” that social classes fight to narrow (make “uni-accentual”) or broaden (make “multi-accentual”) as they struggle for political power. Extending Voloshinov’s account of the role of language in class struggle, the late Stuart Hall (1982, 70) argued that signs “enter into controversial and conflicting social issues as a real and positive social force, affecting their outcomes” and that signs are part of “what has to be struggled over,” for they are part of the “means by which collective social understandings are created – and thus the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilized.”

At present, the millennial sign is fought over by liberals and conservatives who think and write about the world within the normative boundaries of liberal capitalist ideology. Liberals and conservatives battle to win the “hearts and minds” of millennials by articulating the millennial “interest” to their own, linking millennial identity to their political identity and reducing the millennial worldview to the precepts of their ideology. Liberals, for example, gush at the prospect of the

millennial being “Our Liberal Future”(Chait, 2012) while conservatives say that the “Millennial Generation is Abandoning Liberalism”(Street, 2013) and “May Grow Up More Conservative”(Leonhardt, 2014).

The Left, however, has largely remained on the sidelines of the struggle over the millennial sign. This is too bad given that forty two-percent of millennials recently polled say they prefer socialism to capitalism as a means of organizing society but only sixteen percent understand what that really means (Harris, 2014). The goal of this paper is to intervene in the battle over the millennial sign. It critiques some dominant media representations of the millennial and sheds light on the capitalist determinations that shape the circumstances of the millennial as working class. By doing so, I assert the continued salience of class analysis in spite of decades of its forced retreat (Wood, 1999).

Panitch and Leys (2000, vii-viii) observe how “class analysis as a mode of intellectual discourse, and social class as the pivotal axis of political mobilization, have both suffered marginalization, although certainly not complete collapse, in the face of the casualization of work, trade-union decline and the fracturing of socialist political formations, not to mention the impact of neoliberal and post-modernist ideas.” Despite the stultification of class analysis by neoliberal academics, capitalism lumbers forward, and with it, class divisions, conflicts and inequalities. So long as capitalism exists, class will persist as a fact of society and site of analysis. Palmer (2014, 57) says it is “imperative that those on the socialist left – as well as those working in unions, social movements, and all matter of campaigns that see themselves challenging capital and the state in the interests of the dispossessed – reassert what is most solid in the Marxist tradition,” that being, “a politics of class that speaks directly to the betterment of humanity through insistence that the expropriated are as one in their ultimate needs.” This paper supports this praxis, but does so without illusion and with some qualification. The following section elaborates upon this point by defining some key terms, capitalism and the working class in particular.

CAPITALISM, THE WORKING CLASS, MEDIA AND IDEOLOGY

The capitalist system divides people into two antagonistic classes: the owning class (the minority chief executive officers and shareholders who control corporations) and the working class (the majority of people who must sell their labour to corporations in exchange for the wages they depend on to live). In capitalism, workers enter the market and sell

their labour power – the manual and cognitive capabilities required to do tasks – to corporations as a commodity in exchange for the wage they need to meet their basic needs and cultural wants. In the absence of a “basic income” and advanced welfare state, capitalism “proletarianizes” the great majority of people, meaning that it makes them dependent on the wage relation to live and the “silent compulsion of economic relations” (Marx, 1959). In factories and call centres, fast-food restaurants and cafes, mega-malls and boutique retail stores, condo build sites and video game studios, a diversity of people must try to sell their capacity to work in exchange for a wage. The market exchange relationship between workers and corporations appears to be “free” (because there is no direct coercion) and “equal” (because workers and corporations meet in the market as sellers and buyers of labour).

Yet, this apparently “free” and “equal” exchange relationship mystifies the substantive un-freedom of work (i.e. corporations try to control the worker’s labour process) and the unequal outcome (i.e. the corporation exploits the worker’s labour power to enrich its owning class of executives and shareholders). In the capitalist system, the goal of all corporations is profit and to make it, they bring money, technology, media, and hundreds (if not thousands) of waged workers together into productive social relations. In pursuit of profit, corporations try to sell what they produce for more than what they pay their workers. Profit is the difference between the value the corporation takes from selling commodities and the value it pays workers to make them. In capitalism, owners try to squeeze more value from workers than they return to them as wages; workers sometimes respond and resist the terms of their exploitation through acts of solidarity and struggle.

In capitalism, being “working class” is not a lifestyle choice or a performance of the self, but a rudimentary social relation experienced by millions of different people who do not own the means of production and for that reason, must sell their labour power to those that do in exchange for the wage they need to live. Capitalism makes a working class “in-itself” (i.e. people that sell their labour power to corporations for a wage), but it does not necessarily make a working class “for-itself” (i.e. people that identify themselves as being in opposition to capitalism and as having interests distinct from corporations). The people that sell their labour to the Target retail store, for example, are part of a working class in-itself. But there is no guarantee that Target’s employees will act as a class for-itself by taking up a fight for workplace democracy, job security or benefits. As Gindin (2010) says, “There’s nothing inherently radical

about the working class. It just has the potential to be radical”(cited in Lilley, 2010). Though the wage relation is common to most working people, it does not necessarily foster in each worker a revolutionary consciousness about the perils of capitalism or automatically inspire in them an “interest” to move beyond it.

In the twenty-first century, more people are proletarianized than ever before due to the universalization of the wage relation, but the convergences and divergences of exploitation and the oppressions of racism, sexism, ableism and more mean the wage relation is experienced differently (Coburn, 2014). Also, the worker’s identity (their sense of who they are and who they are not) and interest (their sense of what issue matters most to them and what cause they are committed to) do not mechanically spring from the wage relation, but are socially and discursively constructed by big organizations (i.e. governments, parties, corporations, media firms, organized religion, unions) and their discourses (laws, policies, doctrines, stories, press releases, ads) as they are transmitted from one historical period to the next (Hall, 1995). Identities and interests carried over from the past shape those available to working people in the present, but they can be transformed.

In twenty-first century late-capitalist, postmodern-consumerist and multicultural societies like Canada and the United States, working people embody and experience their identities in and across a range of contextually defined and shifting social roles. A worker’s identity is shaped by and shaping of a combination of salient social factors: place (i.e. “Torontonians” for or against the Ford Nation), age (i.e. Boomers or Millennials), “race” (black power or white power), ethnicity (proud Poles or proud Germans), nationality (Canadian or American), sport (British or Brazilian football fans), diet (meat lover or vegan), gender (macho-man or metropolitan metrosexual), sexual preference (heterosexual or LGBTQ), religion (Islam or Judaism), consumerism (Nike or Reebok loyal), political ideology (liberal or conservative), lifestyle (sedentary or active), nationality (Chinese or American), fandom (Kanye West or Drake), occupation (Day Maintenance Associate at Wal-Mart or Apple Family Room specialist at the Apple Retail Store) and more. These are but a few of the scraps of self that may constitute a worker’s identity and which workers embody and live in their hearts and minds, sometimes fleetingly, sometimes, forever. None of these *essentially* link with anti-capitalism or the politics of socialist struggle.

So, though the working class in-itself exists (waged labour and exploitation is a fact of capitalism), the working class for itself (workers

that recognize their interest to be in conflict with capitalism and unite to move beyond it) always haunts the capitalist system but infrequently takes material form. Save moments and movements in periods of prolonged crisis and upheaval, the working class is most often dis-united. The “working class” *ought* to be one for itself, but most of the time, it is not. The working class’s identity politics and the ways that workers of the world identify themselves and their interests are not consonant or predictable, but contradictory and fluid. The working class is made and unmade in tandem with capitalist transformations, State formations and initiatives, wars of maneuver and of position, the clash of ideologies and the cycles and circuits of struggle.

The media and culture industries play a significant role in making and unmaking the working class. These industries are at once profit-seeking firms and a powerful means of representing the social world. “[T]he communications industries play a central double role in modern societies, as industries in their own right and as the major site of the representations and arenas of debate through which the overall system is imagined and argued over” (Wasko, Murdock and Sousa, 2011, 2). The media industries are a major source of the representations of the world which express and shape how people think about the world, their identities and those of others (Dines and Humez, 2011; Kellner, 1995). Books, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, podcasts, radio broadcasts, Hollywood films, TV shows, ads, websites and video games convey representations of the world that address and shape how people come to perceive the world and what it means to be an owner or a worker, rich or poor, man or woman, white or black, adult or youth, Us or Them. In pursuit of profit, the media industries try to inform and entertain, but in doing so, they play a powerful role in socializing people; they often construct and normalize certain ways of being, thinking and acting that align with capitalism while denying and stigmatizing anti-capitalism.

By taking part in the social construction of reality, the media industries and their many representations of society may shape, in significant ways, how workers perceive capitalism and their place in it. Media representations might reveal or conceal the conditions of capitalism – the hierarchical class structure, the class division and the class conflicts. They might also recognize or deny the existence of a working class (in and for itself) and encourage or discourage people to see themselves as part of it. The meaning of the working class is “constituted within, not outside of representation” (Hall, 1995, 4) and media representations “provide the materials out of which many people construct their sense of

class" (Kellner, 1995, 1). Indeed, the media industries have the power to frame the working class in positive or negative terms by representing it as a source of pride or shame, empowerment or disempowerment, ossification or transformation. Overall, the media is an important site where working class identities are formed and deformed, where people's understanding of their place in society takes shape and where dominant norms, beliefs and values about what a worker should expect or demand from a life of waged labour can be affirmed or opposed.

The North American media industries – the vertically and horizontally integrated conglomerates that own the dominant means of producing media representations in society – underrepresent the working class. Many media products abnegate the working class by portraying everyone as part of an expansive and upwardly mobile "middle-class" society in which no class antagonism exists (Kendall, 2004; Zweig, 2000). Some fetishistically over-represent people as consumers and under-represent them as workers, emphasizing the sphere of consumption and hiding the abode of production. Others render the working class invisible by glorifying and making role models out of the lives and lifestyles of the system's rich, privileged and powerful. When media products do address social class, they often stereotype working people as being inherently wasteful, ignorant, angry, childish and tasteless (Butsch, 2003; Kendall, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Zweig, 2000). In sum, media conglomerates and media products often deprive viewers of the ability to see themselves in positive terms as a working class with an outlook and interest different from capitalism and its owners. Media firms repackage and sell partial and selective images of and messages about already existing identities that are aligned with the status quo to resonate with the "common sense" of viewers and reproduce capitalist ideology.

When media corporations produce and sell media products that conceal the real social relations of the capitalist system – class divisions between owners and workers, structurally antagonistic class interests and the ebb and flow of class struggles – they uphold the ideology of the system and its rulers. The media commodities that under-represent and misrepresent real capitalist social relations are "ideological" because they carry misleading and false ideas about the essence of the system. That said, in periods typified by crisis, media firms may produce and sell goods that convey real representations of capitalist social relations which unsettle ideology and express opposition to it.

Now that I've posited a historical materialist conceptualization of capitalism, the working class, the media industries and ideology, I turn

to examining the media-generated discourse about “the millennial.” Do media representations of the millennial help the young people they address as millennials understand the real capitalist social relations that shape their present circumstances? Do media claims and statements about the millennial hold a mirror to capitalist logics or distort them? Do they support or undermine the formation of a millennial working class, in and for itself? In what follows, I highlight and analyze four significant media representations of the millennial that seem to float above the capitalist forces and relations that act upon it and the youthful bodies it possesses. I critique these media representations and show how they distort real capitalist social relations and may prevent millennials from seeing themselves as part of the working class.

THE MILLENNIAL AS A MEMBER OF A YOUTH COHORT

One way the media represents the “millennial” is as a person born in a certain period of time, as a member of a cohort. According to some millennial authorities, a millennial is someone (anyone) born between 1977 and 1995 (Dorsey, 2014). Other “experts” say the “millennial” period of incubation spans from 1982 to 2001 (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Most millennial specialists, however, do not clearly explain what the special social significance of the space between these two moments in historical time is for the formation of the millennial’s identity, why it has been selected as a period or how. One wonders what two big events bookended these moments. Was it Deng Xiaoping’s readiness to forge “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and the OJ Simpson trial? Perhaps it was the 1982 U.S. embargo on Libya’s petroleum imports and the 9/11 terrorist attack? Many of the authors who routinely depict every person born at some point in this ill-defined period as belonging to a big group whose common characteristics are different from those exhibited by other cohorts do not seem to care much for careful signposting. Some purveyors of millennial discourse, then, presume that a common birth period spanning two decades or so gives people a common identity and set of traits that are unlike those of people born into other periods. Hence, the millennial is different from “Gen Xers” (people born between the mid-1960s to late 1970s) and those labelled “Baby Boomers” (people born between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s) because they “came to be” and “came of age” in the period they did. Commonality of birth period is said to unite millions of people as millennials, cement together their

ideas and practices, and ultimately divide them from the Gen Xers and the Boomers.

History matters to the making of identities, no doubt. But what's missing from media discourse on the millennial identity is any sense that the history which makes it moves due to cycles of struggle between protagonists (the workers of the world) and antagonists (the global rich, the 1 percent). By representing the millennial as a member of a cohort defined by period of birth, not by class relations, the media obscures capitalism's class divide. It is as if the Silicon Valley-dwelling, Facebook owning and conservative-cause supporting billionaire Mark Zuckerberg and the queer, black and waged worker at the H&M down at the local mall have everything in common, more so than say Zuckerberg and Google-owner Larry Page, just because they were born in the 1980s and likely watched *The Cosby Show*. By defining age as the thing that unites and divides people, millennial media discourse distorts the substantive division between owning and working class millennials.

Yet, a division exists. Ruling class millennials, for example, include Perenna Kei (worth \$1.3 billion), Duston Moskovitz (worth \$6.8 billion), Mark Zuckerberg (worth \$28.5 billion), Anton Kathrein (\$1.35 billion), Drew Houston (\$1.2 billion), Scott Duncan (\$6.3 billion), Yang Huiyan (\$6.9 billion), Fahd Hariri (\$1.2 billion), Robert Pera (\$2.7 billion), Julia Oetker (\$1.65 billion), and Marie Besnier Beauvalot (\$2.7 billion) (Mac, 2014). 1 percent of the millennials under thirty-two years old who control \$1 million or more do so because this wealth was handed down to them by their rich parents (O'Donnel, 2013). Over the next two decades, the millennial kids of the 1 percent super-rich Boomers and Xers are set to inherit about \$15 trillion (Donovan, 2014), which will further solidify an oligarchic class structure and exacerbate the indisputable problem of class inequality. In twenty-first century capitalism, a millennial owning class minority and working class majority exists. But the media representation of the millennial obscures class division within this cohort and substitutes generational conflict for class conflict, pitting "the young" against "the old" and "the old" against "the middle-aged." It hides the growing gap between the inter-generational owning and working classes and how *all* workers – Boomers, Xers, Millennials – live in a class divided society.

Capitalism's class divide is growing. One percent of the world's population controls forty percent of the world's total wealth, the eighty-five richest people in the world control more wealth than the nearly 3.5 billion people who belong to the poorest half of the population, the

400 richest Americans own more assets than the poorest 150 million combined, the top one per cent of U.S. households controls about twenty-three percent of the nation's total income and the average U.S. chief executive (CEO) is paid approximately three-hundred and thirty times more than the U.S. worker (Cassidy, 2014; Olive, 2014; Picketty, 2014). Two hundred and twenty five million people are unemployed, wages as a percent of GDP are at an all-time low while profits as a percentage of GDP are at an all-time high and one in three people on the planet are poor, barely able to meet their basic needs (Common Dreams, 2012).

Between the early 1980s and 2010, the wealth of Canada's ruling elite grew and now, the nation's 1 percent accumulates at least 10 times more than the typical worker. In 1980, the ratio of pay for Canadian chief executive officers vs. frontline workers was 20:1; in 2013, it was 171: 1 (Olive, 2014). In 2013, the 100 highest-paid CEOs in Canada took home a total of \$7.9 million, each making about 171 times more than what they paid workers (Olive, 2014). In 2012, Canadian Pacific Railway CEO Hunter Harrison received \$49.2 million; Thomson Reuters CEO James Smith got \$18.8 million; Talisman Energy CEO John Manzoni collected \$18.7 million; Eldorado Gold Corp CEO Paul Wright accumulated \$18.7 million; Magna CEO Donald Walker absorbed \$16.9 million; Open Text Corp CEO Mark Barrenechea took \$14.8 million; Royal Bank of Canada CEO Gordon Nixon, \$13.7 million; Onex Corp CEO Gerald Schwarz, \$13.3 million; and, Catamaran Corp CEO Mark Thierer, \$12.9 million. The top ten highest-paid CEOs in Canada accumulated a total of \$177 million dollars in 2012, a sum larger than what is earned by a small town of about 10,000 median waged workers.

Capitalist history, not abstract time, is what makes the millennial working class. As Marx (1852) might put it, the millennials "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." The millennial working class lives and works alongside previous generations of workers in a class divided society, but it came to be in a set of circumstances that were slightly different from those which were endured by their parents and their parents. The millennial "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1977) was crystallized in a period of time not exactly like the one experienced by the "Gen Xers" and the "Boomers." The millennials did not live through the radicalizing upheavals of the 60s or grow up feeling that the revolution was around the corner. They were not alive during the Keynesian welfare state's highpoint and the "class compromise" from which the energies

of the 1960s exploded into different political formations. They did not face the onset of neoliberal restructuring in the mid-1970s or know that they came of age as this ruling “class project” took off (Harvey, 2007). The millennial working class came to be in circumstances shaped by the effects of major economic transformations, state policies and ideologies that its members did not choose, but inherited. Though shaped by capitalist conditions, the millennial working class has the power to change them in solidarity with other cohorts, young and old.

THE MILLENNIAL AS A SOVEREIGN CONSUMER

A second significant way the media represents the millennial is as a consumer of commodities and services (Business, 2013; Hoffmann, 2014; Ray, 2014). Since the 1950s, capital’s mind management corps have mined, co-opted and integrated the trends, styles and mannerisms of youth culture into their selling campaigns. Today, marketing, advertising and promotional relations firms – the combined promotional industries – frame the millennial subject as a consumer of the goods and services sold by their corporate clients. In “Here is Everything You Need to Know About the Millennial Consumer,” Hoffmann (2014) describes the millennial consumer’s characteristics. Millennials are said to constitute 27 percent of the U.S. consumer market and “are more diverse than any previous generation.” This multi-cultural millennial is a “digital native” (i.e. they grew up with new technology) and a proactive consumer (i.e. they search for tips about what to buy from friends, partners, parents and websites). The millennial consumer is networked at all times, uses the Internet to browse for commodities and presumably wants to be targeted with sales pitches for goods via Facebook, Twitter and all kinds of social media platforms and digital devices. In *Marketing to Millennials: Reach the Largest and Most Influential Generation of Consumers Ever* (2013), Barkely Advertising’s Executive Vice President Jeff Fromm and his lawyer co-author, Christie Garton, affix some other traits to the millennial consumer. They claim that “80 million members of the millennial generation (born 1977 to 1995) represent over 25% of the U.S. population and more than \$200 billion in annual buying power.” They say the millennial consumer values social networking, isn’t shy about sharing opinions, is a prosumer who likes to participate in product development and marketing, expects and demands authenticity and transparency from companies and is a tastemaker, effective at swaying and shaping the shopping habits of others. Promoting their book, Fromm and Barton (2013) explain how marketing companies can build the “trust and

loyalty” of the millennial consumer and “persuade” it to buy what their clients sell.

This media representation of the millennial as consumer is typical in a capitalist system which depends for its survival on the ideological reproduction of consumerism as the dominant way of life. In the capitalist system, corporations produce an abundance of commodified goods and services for market exchange (and profit), not for social use (or human need). But no one corporation can guarantee in advance of circulation how many of their commodities will be consumed or how much profit they will make as result. To increase the prospect of maximal commodities being consumed and optimal profit realized, corporations spend a tremendous amount of money on promotional campaigns that try to persuade people to desire what they sell (Sweezy and Baran, 1966). In the early twentieth century, the promotional industries –advertising, marketing and PR – developed to service capitalism’s consumer cultivation imperative (Ewen, 1996). In the twenty-first century, the “sales effort” still performs a crucial consumer-demand management function for the corporations that rule the market. “Consumer spending in today’s economy, dominated by giant firms, is significantly dependent on the sales effort, i.e., marketing as a whole, with advertising as its most conspicuous form”(Holleman, Stole, Bellamy-Foster and McChesney, 2011).

The identity and interest forming promotional industries are not in the business of making ads that reflect existing consumer wants for commodities but are instead paid by the captains of industry to engineer images of “what people need and must have” to sustain massive “waves of enthusiasm” for commodities (Debord, 1994). Manufacturing and managing the consumer and the commodity spectacle is what keeps the promotional sector profitable. The promotional firms are paid to differentiate the images of their client’s commodities from the images that rival firms attach to the goods and services sold by others. They design, for example, the brand images which aim to differentiate Tim Horton’s from Starbucks, McDonalds from Wendy’s, Apple from Samsung and Nike from Reebok. In 2013, U.S. corporations collectively spent about \$140.2 billion on multi-media marketing campaigns to manage consumer wants for well-crafted brand images (Kantar Media, 2014). In that same year, Apple spent \$662 million, Samsung spent \$597 million and Microsoft spent \$493 million to get people to buy the images of their technology (Advertising Age, 2013). In capitalism, the very corporations that produce “want” pay other corporations to define what the want is

and convince consumers to pay for its image. Consumers do not decide what corporations make or sell, nor do they always know exactly what they want from corporations in advance of the spectacular campaigns that tell them what to want and what the meaning of their want is.

Though dubious, the media representation of the millennial as an empowered consumer aligns perfectly with neoliberal-capitalist ideology's champion and hero, the "sovereign consumer." Neoliberal authors posit that human freedom is best advanced by the maximization of business freedoms within a state characterized by property rights, free markets and free trade. For free-market fundamentalists, to be free is to be a sovereign consumer and to be a sovereign consumer is to rationally choose what commodity one wants, when one wants it, from a "free" marketplace (Harvey, 2007; Hutt, 1940; Tucker, 2004; von Hayek, 2007). The media represents the millennial as a sovereign consumer in a free-market that reflects their every demand with a commodity supply. The hipster millennial wants a quizzical hamburger: Wendy's launches the "Pretzel Bacon Cheeseburger"; the health conscious millennial wants low calorie fast food: McDonald's releases the McWrap; the millennial college student wants a big box store: Wall-Mart builds on-campus (Thrasher, 2013).

Corporations use the idea of millennial consumer "demand" to rationalize the quarterly roll out of new products and to make millennials collectively feel as though they are really in control of the marketplace (when they are not). By representing each new commodity in the marketplace as reflective of millennial demand, the media makes the millennial consumer appear to have decision-making powers comparable to a CEO. As if Apple Inc. discovered a collective millennial desire for the Apple iPad in 2009 and that this is what inspired Steve Jobs to announce the iPad's global launch in 2010. In reality, most commodities available in the marketplace are chosen by corporate decision-makers far in advance (and in anticipation) of the millennial consumer's "choice." Millennials do select commodities to consume (from hundreds upon thousands of available selections), but corporations possess the power choose what commodities actually get made as "selections." Though consumer demand matters to corporations, it is not the primary cause of the capitalist process through which they research and develop, manufacture and bring things and services into the world as commodities. The corporate imperative to expand operations in pursuit of profit on behalf of shareholders is what maintains the ongoing production of "new" commodities. The capitalist goal of ensuring people will buy these

commodities is what buttresses the growth of the promotional industries and their management of millennial consumer want.

In addition to perpetuating the myth of the sovereign consumer, the media representation of the millennial consumer is deeply classist. To make “free” market choices, the millennial must first have money to spend, but not all millennials possess the same amount of money due to the class system. In fact, the media’s ideal-type multicultural, smartphone-owning and brand-conscious millennial panders to the already wealthy millennials who have the new technology, the Internet access, the digital literacy skills, the time and the money to shop for and consume commodities. The millennial consumer depicted in the corporate mediascape is a hybrid, urban, tech-savvy, college-educated and “middle class” hipster, never a rural and racialized poor person who cannot afford an iPad, who is deprived of a computer and Internet connection and who struggles to earn a college degree in the time left over after working flex-time shifts for a meager wage in the service sector. The consumer market includes and excludes and targets and ignores millennials based upon their ability to pay.

In addition to being classist, the media’s millennial consumer hides the human source of the commodities available in the market: the bodies and minds of millions of waged workers. The image of the North American millennial as a free and equal consumer in a marketplace of branded commodities made just for them conceals how corporations exploit young waged workers all over the world. Furthermore, the media representation of the millennial consumer erases half of the millennial’s waking life by encouraging them to see themselves as *only* consumers. To consume, most millennials must work, but the media representation of the millennial as only a consumer conceals the waged work the millennial must endure to acquire the money they need to buy the branded commodities they have been taught by the spectacle to want. The American Eagle slacks, the Olive Garden salad bar, the Smirnoff mickey, the Apple iPad and Tiffany pearl broach cost money and to get it, the millennial must sell a piece of themselves to a corporation. Through this exchange relationship, the millennial gets some of the cash they need to buy status commodities, but loses a piece of their being in the process.

The dispossessions and sorrows of millennial work (waged and unwaged) are many: deference to management’s control over embodied emotions; the “one best way” of speaking customer service scripts, all day; the psychological drain and physical strain of labouring with one’s

heart and mind to personify the company's "brand promise"; flexibly coming together with others in projects that quickly fall apart and do not reflect one's true passions; virtually working round the clock, tethered to technologies that collapse pre-existing boundaries between labour-time and leisure-time, work and home. Work in capitalism wears the millennial down, but the promotional industries motivate the millennial to keep slogging away at it in exchange for the engineered promises of consumerism.

The media representation of the millennial as a consumer conceals the capitalist dispossessions and degradations of waged work but is nonetheless functional to the reproduction of the capitalist circuit. This representation teaches the millennial to see their freedom in the marketplace, not the work-space (the freedom to consume perhaps makes the unfreedom of work bearable); it encourages the millennial to view their means to change the world as the marketplace, not the state ("vote with your dollars" for the best corporate brand, not for a party that best represents your class interests); it gets millennials to view their common interest in lifestyle niche markets, not pro-worker organizations (mobilize with fellow shoppers to lobby for bargains, forget about class solidarity, collective bargaining and political demands). Overall, the millennial-as-consumer hides the millennial-as-worker and closes down yet another space in society for the millennial to see themselves as part of a working class with interests non-identical to the mall.

THE MILLENNIAL AS A WORKER TO BE MANAGED

A third way the media represents the millennial is as a worker, but one that is an object of modern management (Ashkenas, 2014; Bradt, 2014; Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2010; Heathfield, 2014; Lancaster and Stillman, 2010; O'Malley, 2014; Sannelli, 2014). This media representation depicts the millennial as a "young worker" whose ethos poses all kinds of opportunities and challenges for HR departments. For example, in *Managing the Millennials: Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today's Workforce*, Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch (2010) describe the work habits and values of the millennial to provide "managers of all ages with specific recommendations and tools for engaging this burgeoning demographic – some 78 million strong." In *The M-Factor: How the Millennial Generation is Rocking the Workplace*, Lancaster and Stillman (2010) profess to offer "the definitive guide to Millennials in the workplace – what they want, how they think, and how to unlock their talents to your

organization's advantage." In *Motivating the "What's in it For Me" Workforce: Manage Across the Generational Divide and Increase Profits*, Marston (2007) explains how managers can motivate the millennial to help their corporation "achieve peak performance" and "organizational success" so they "can get more out of every worker, no matter their age and attitude." Moore (2014) says the millennial worker holds "a postmodern worldview, which is quite different from the generations before" and encourages managers to "better understand the postmodern worldview to effectively work with millennials."

In some accounts, the millennial worker is a value-added benefit to business operations. Equipped with a smart phone and always connected by the Internet to a virtual network of cosmopolitan, civically-minded and multi-cultural "friends," the millennial helps corporations to compete in a fast-changing and global marketplace by pioneering new-fangled customer service models, collaboratively solving efficiency problems and innovating new products (Burstein, 2013; Fuscaldò, 2014). In others, the millennial is a problem, a slacker who undermines corporate performance. Distracted by the instant gratifications of Web 2.0, obsessed with brand images, coddled by helicopter parents and willfully under-performing, the millennial is a lazy, entitled, selfish, atomized and disengaged worker (Stampler, 2013). As a boon or burden to capital, the millennial is a worker that exists as a reified object, a resource to be managed in ways that align with a firm's profit goals.

This managerial-manufactured media representation of the millennial as a manageable worker reflects the fact that in capitalism, owners do rely on human relations experts and consultants to run their operations. In early twentieth century capitalism, owners hired engineers, Fredrick W. Taylor being the most renowned, to figure out how to control how workers worked (Noble, 1977). Taylor said that owners could increase production efficiencies by studying the worker's labour process in minute detail, determining the one best way to do a job and then imposing this standard upon workers. Taylor's "Scientific Management" tried to maximize the productivity of workers by increasing their "efficiency" with strategies that aimed to standardize and speed up work (Noble, 1984). By advising managers to break down production into small and repetitive steps, Taylorism divorced the conceptualization of the work process from the workers themselves and put it in the control of managers. By standardizing the steps in each production process, Taylorism made it possible for managers to easily train workers, thereby undermining their skill set and bargaining power. Taylorism taught owners that the labour

process could be engineered and that workers could be replaced, just like the machines that workers used to assemble goods (Braverman, 1974).

Taylorism persists in many millennial-filled workplaces such as McDonalds (Ritzer, 2009), but this Fordist and hierarchical managerial strategy of control exists alongside a post-Fordist and vertical managerial strategy that aims to get workers to coordinate their own exploitation. In the nominally “humane workplaces” of the New Economy, managers recognize each worker’s unique identity and enable them to express their feelings and contribute to decision-making (Ross, 2004). By encouraging individualized acts of task-mastering and autonomy, managers deter workers from uniting as a class for itself and fighting for more just workplaces. In postmodern management theory and practice, this “new spirit of capitalism” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) gets millennial workers to superintend their own dispossession. Self-actualization occurs through self-exploitation and freedom is attained by subordinating oneself to more tasks. This mode of capitalist governance encourages workers to loathe themselves, not the system, for their plight. As a tool of the owning class, management takes sides in class struggles.

Yet, the media representation of the millennial as a worker to be managed makes management seem benign, even class neutral. A well-managed corporation seems to support a win-win situation for millennial CEOs, managers and workers alike. This sanguine view of the power relationship between managers and workers downplays the often intense conflicts between management and workers and the fact that the outcome of a well-managed organization can lead to a win-lose situation, with managers and CEOs being the winners and workers, the losers. For example, a manager may have an interest in getting the millennial worker to work harder and faster for little pay so as to maximize their productivity and add to the overall profit margins of their organization; the worker may have an interest in working at a pace they determine and feel comfortable with and for as much pay as possible to enhance their quality of work and life. The amount of pay a millennial gets for their work, the amount of time they must work to get paid, and the way they think and act at work are all sites of contention, negotiation and struggle.

But these sources of class conflict don’t appear in the made-to-be-managed media representation of the millennial. Instead, media discourse on the managed millennial focuses on solving the problem of a supposed “generational conflict” in the workplace between the millennial, Gen Xer and Boomer workers. The PR for Lancaster’s (2003)

When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work, for example, declares the workplace to be “a battle zone” where “colleagues sometimes act like adversaries” and “generations glare at one another across the conference table” in a blitz of “conflict and confusion.” This ad copy for the book says that “eighty million Baby Boomers vacillate between their overwhelming need to succeed and their growing desire to slow down and enjoy life,” Gen Xers “try to prove themselves constantly yet dislike the image of being overly ambitious, disrespectful, and irreverent” and Millennials “mix savvy with social conscience and promise to further change the business landscape.” Here, workplace conflict arises from cohorts, not social classes; class conflicts between owners and workers of all ages over the terms of work are invisible.

Furthermore, the media representation of the millennial as an object of management effaces the continuing intersections of sexualized and racialized class inequality and oppression within the twenty-first century workplace. Of all the CEOs currently running Fortune 500 hundred companies, six are African-American (1.2 percent), nine are Asian (1.8 percent), eight are Latin (1.6 percent) and 23 are women (4.6 percent) (Zweignenhalf, 2013). Though a rainbow colored ruling class of CEOs does business round the world, at least 90.8 percent of the U.S.’s largest companies are still run by white men (Diversity Inc., 2014). The CEOs of the U.S. venture capital industry, for example, are predominantly male (89 percent) and white (76 percent) (Teten, 2014). And U.S. media conglomerates are mostly run by white men and staffed by white male cultural content producers (Pesta, 2012; Women’s Media Center, 2014).

Sexualized class inequality (the oppression of working women by corporations predominantly owned and run by men) continues to keep many women in subordinate positions. Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor and under-represented among upper income earners; women working full time earn about 76 percent of what men do for similar jobs; and women spend over one and half times more hours than men doing unpaid domestic work (Bouw, 2013). Racialized class inequality (the oppression of people who are racialized by those who imagine themselves to be colour blind: “white people”) persists as well. Racialized workers are under-represented in managerial positions and over-represented in low-end service jobs. Also, racialized workers take home less in pay than non-racialized workers: racialized working men make 68 cents to 76 cents for every dollar earned by white workers and

racialized women earn even less than racialized and non-racialized men (Galabuzi, Caspiullai and Go, 2012).

Clearly, postmodern management's recognition of the millennial worker's "diversity" does not support the equitable redistribution of the surplus or challenge the power of a largely white and male ruling class. Instead, it transforms diversity into a resource to be exploited on behalf of it.

THE MILLENNIAL AS IMMISERATED VICTIM OF HARD TIMES

A fourth way the media represents the millennial is as an immiserated victim of hard times. Over the past few years, numerous news stories have framed the millennial as part of a completely impoverished cohort with slogans like "generation jobless" (The Economist, 2013), the "in-debt generation" (Parsons, 2014), "generation precarious" (Shupac, 2013) and "generational hopeless" (Richards, 2013).

There is truth in this media framing of the millennial. In the United States, 40 percent of unemployed workers are millennials, meaning there are about 4.6 million millennials who depend on extra-economic support systems to subsist (Fottrell, 2014). While the overall unemployment rate in Canada is about 6.9 percent, among millennials, it hovers between 13.5 percent and 14.5 percent (CBC, 2013). Debt has become a way of life and a way of work for millennials (Ellis, 2014; Ljunggren, 2013). Bonded to banks and struggling to keep up with debt payments, millennials work for meager wages, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, chipping away at mountainous totals on their credit card bills. Yet, the jobs they work to pay down debt are increasingly precarious (Cohen and dePeuter, 2013). Temp work is growing at a faster pace than full-time jobs and in 2012, two million temps competed for contractual gigs (Grant, 2013). Half of the workers who live in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) subsist in a precarious employment relation to numerous firms (Mcisaac and Yates, 2014). A recent Pew Research (2014) poll called "Millennials in Adulthood" explains that millennials "have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income" than the Gen Xer and Boomer cohorts "had at the same stage of their life cycles." The millennial working class is under-employed, indebted and precarious. These circumstances foster intense psychological disturbances: stress, fits of anxiety, low self-esteem, muddled thoughts of depression and nihilism.

The media representation of the millennial as an immiserated victim of hard times sheds light on the real circumstances of the millennial working class but fails to explain them as an outcome of capitalist logics. Pew Research (2014), for example, frames the millennial's "difficult economic circumstances" with regard to the Great Recession (2007-2009) and the long-term effects of "globalization and rapid technological change." But the recession, globalization and rapid technological change are not in themselves responsible for the millennial working class's immiseration. They are effects of capitalist production for profit and the decisions made by corporate managers in pursuit of the goal of maximal profit on behalf of the shareholders they serve. As Marx (1990) might say, "[millennial] pauperism forms the condition of capitalist production and of the capitalist development of wealth...in proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the [millennial] worker, be his [or her] payment high or low, must grow worse." In the capitalist system, the ultimate goal of all corporations is profit. Corporations try to maximize profit by keeping the cost of producing and circulating commodities as low as possible. To do so, they strategize to keep the amount of money they must pay workers for the jobs they do to as little as they can. At present, corporate profits are at an all-time high while wages are at an all-time low (Blodget, 2012; Brennan, 2012; Norris, 2014). Corporations are raking in super-profits because they are paying their millennial workers lower and lower sums for the work they do.

First, corporations reduce labour costs by demolishing standard employment relationships with workers. In response to a profit-squeeze stemming from worker mobilization, strikes and the autonomous impulse, corporations coordinated a shift from a Fordist to post-Fordist regime of accumulation and flexibilized employment relations (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Harvey, 1989). Corporations started replacing full-time and secure jobs with regular hours on a relatively fixed schedule with a non-standard employment regime that is part-time, insecure and temporary. By shirking a standard employment relation with workers, corporations flexibly hire and fire workers as they please, eliminate costs associated with benefits and maintain a precarious reserve army (Standing, 2011).

Second, corporations slash their labour costs by generalizing internment, or unpaid work programs (Perlin, 2009). These reinforce the class structure by privileging wealthy millennials and discriminating against the poor ones who cannot afford to work for free. Corporations use intern programs eliminate paid positions while millennials actively intern

themselves in hopes of acquiring the experience, skills and connections needed to land a waged job (de Peuter, Cohen, and Brophy, 2012).

Third, corporations drive down labour costs “here” by off-shoring tasks to low paid workers elsewhere. “Blue-collar” manufacturing jobs lost to offshoring were supposed to be replaced by higher-paying and less strenuous “service” collar jobs. But service corporations offshore tasks to workers in other countries as well and the primary reason they do so is to save on the cost of labour (Cheung and Rossiter, 2008). Also, corporations reduce labour costs by importing foreign workers – mechanics, builders, engineers, machinists and cooks – to do jobs here but for a wage that is less than what domestic workers are paid (Coles, 2013; Collacott, 2014; Goodman, 2014).

Fourth, corporations buy and implement automation systems to minimize or completely eliminate waged jobs. In almost every sector, corporations have developed and acquired information and communication technologies (ICTs) and algorithms to replace waged workers (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014). Boeing’s gigantic jets are automatically riveted by giant machines and Philips electronics are assembled by hundreds of robots. In transportation, firms are building driverless vehicles, conductor-less trains and pilotless drones. In music, algorithms write songs; in fashion, they design t-shirts; in publishing, they write books; in the news, they generate headline stories and daily information feeds. The more robots corporations employ, the fewer workers they must to pay.

Using some or all of the above strategies, corporations keep profits high by paying millennial workers as little wages as they can get away with. The profit-motive thus immiserates the millennial working class.

CONCLUSION: PEDAGOGY OF THE MILLENNIAL WORKING CLASS

As argued in this paper, four dominant media representations of the millennial distort and deflect attention away from the real capitalist determinations of twenty-first century millennial life and labour. The media representation of the millennial as a member of a youth cohort obscures the reality of class division within this cohort and all generational cohorts. The media representation of the millennial as a sovereign consumer gets millennials to see their freedom in the marketplace, not in the workplace. The media representation of the millennial as a worker to be managed obscures the capitalist power dynamics of modern management and the class, sexual and racial oppressions of the workplace. The

media representation of the millennial as a victim of hard times sheds light on the dire circumstances of the millennial working class but fails to explain millennial immiseration with regard to real capitalist determinations, the profit-motive in particular.

Together, the four media representations examined in this paper constitute a neoliberal capitalist pedagogy of the millennial. This media method of instruction teaches millennials to see themselves and their interests as identical with the capitalist system and the worldview of its owning strata. It obscures the real capitalist social relations that shape millennial life and labour and works to deter millennials from seeing themselves, their problems and their possibilities, as part of the concerns facing the working class. In a context in which pundits teach millennials to conform with the status quo, Left educators might try speaking *with* millennial workers about the essence of twenty-first century capitalism, learn from their experiences of it, and co-develop an understanding that aims to move beyond it.

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Neoliberalism and the Attack on Education: An Interview with Henry A. Giroux

Heather McLean

Heather McLean¹ (HM): In your latest book, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*, you identify the broad project of neoliberalism as the key mode of governance, policy and ideology threatening public education. What are your greatest concerns? How can we fight back?

Henry A. Giroux² (HAG): Public and higher education are under siege in neoliberal societies for a number of reasons. First, they are under attack because they are public, not necessarily because they are failing. As public sites, they offer potential spaces, pedagogies, and modes of thinking that are critical, thoughtful, and, frankly, dangerous because they not only offer the conditions to inspire students to be self-reflective and critically engaged, but also energize them to connect what they learn to what it might mean to hold power accountable, address social injustices, and both imagine and struggle for a more just world. Public and higher education are considered dangerous because they harbor the possibility of speaking the unspeakable, uttering critical thoughts, producing dissent, and creating students willing to hold power accountable. The apostles of neoliberalism, on the other hand, want to eliminate the critical function of public education on all levels and they are working hard to transform these institutions into disimagination factories. My biggest fear that as more and more students labour under onerous debt, subjected to a form of indentured citizenship, coupled with modes of

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education that are utterly instrumental and depoliticizing, they will become less and less interested in defining themselves as individual and social agents. Inhabiting zones of hardship, suffering, exclusion, and joblessness, young people increasingly live in fear as they struggle to survive social conditions and policies more characteristic of authoritarian governments than democratic states.

Indeed, many young people around the globe appear to be caught in a sinister web of ethical and material poverty manufactured by a state that trades in suspicion, bigotry, state-sanctioned violence, and disposability. Democracy loses its character as a disruptive element, a force of dissent, an insurrectional call for responsible change; democracy all but degenerates into an assault on the radical imagination, reconfigured as a force for whitewashing all ethical and moral considerations. What is left is a new kind of authoritarianism and depoliticized individuals increasingly subjected to regimes of greed, dispossession, fear, and surveillance that becomes normalized. These dark times that are now pushing more and more societies into a distinct form of neoliberal authoritarianism demand a new political language and strategies to match.

First, educators and others need to figure out how to defend more vigorously public and higher education as a public good and democratic public sphere. Given the global attack on all levels of education, it is crucial for faculty, students, and others to be able to articulate how central it is in producing the formative culture necessary to educate young people to be critical and engaged agents willing to fight to deepen and expand the promises of a substantive democracy.

Second, this also means addressing what the optimum conditions are for educators, artists, activists and other cultural workers to perform their work in an autonomous and critical fashion. In other words, we need to think through the conditions that make academic labour fruitful, engaging, and relevant. In addition to developing an international movement for the defense of public goods, especially public and higher education, we need to turn the growing army of temporary workers now swelling the ranks of the academy into full-time, permanent faculty. The presence of so many part-time employees is scandalous and it both weakens the power of the faculty and exploits them. The neoliberal governing model must be abolished for more democratic modes of power sharing and faculty must fight diligently for eliminating all of the corporate and other fundamentalist ideological and structural forces that prevent this from happening.

Third, how we view the role and purpose of education is inextricably linked to how we address young people as critical and engaged critical agents who are willing to take risks, engage in thoughtful dialogue, and address what it means to be socially responsible. Students must be treated as engaged learners, critical citizens, and socially responsible agents, rather than as commodities and consumers. This suggests developing modes of pedagogy that are about the practice of freedom; that is, pedagogical practices that create the conditions for students to be self-reflective, critical, and self-conscious about their relationship with others and to know something about their relationship with the larger world. Pedagogy in this sense not only provides important thoughtful and intellectual competencies; it also enables people to act effectively upon the societies in which they live. This is a pedagogy that both inspires and energizes by making knowledge meaningful in order to be both critical and transformative.

Finally, the attack on public and higher education must be understood as part of a systemic attack by neoliberalism on all public goods and institutions that do not serve the interests of the military-industrial-surveillance state. The attack on the social state and the rise of the punishing state go hand-in-hand with the attack on education under regimes of neoliberalism.

HM: You claim that public intellectuals, academics who connect their scholarship to important public issues, play an important role in generating critical debate. Can you elaborate?

HAG: Neoliberalism is a toxin that is generating a predatory class of the walking dead who are producing what might be called dead zones of the imagination. This points to both a political and educational challenge for academics. Faculty have a moral and political responsibility to connect their scholarship to those important social issues that make clear that the role of both public and higher education and pedagogy itself must be part of a broader political and moral practice that believes that issues of justice and democracy are worth fighting for in both the classroom and the larger society. The time has come for academics to develop political languages and transformative pedagogies in which critical understanding, civic values, and social responsibility – and the institutions that support them – become central to invigorating and fortifying a new era of civic imagination, a renewed sense of social agency, and an impassioned international social movement with the vision, organization, and set of strategies capable of challenging the neoliberal nightmare engulfing the planet. Surely, this is one role that academics

can take on in order not only to defend the conditions of their own labour but to make clear to a wider public why education is central to the struggle for a substantive democracy.

Academics can play a vital role in helping broader publics recognize that the attack on higher education cannot be fully comprehended outside of the attack on the welfare state, social provisions, public servants, and democratic public spheres. Nor can such attacks be understood outside of the production of the neoliberal subject, one who is atomized, unable to connect private issues to larger public considerations, while being taught to believe in a form of radical individualism that enables a fast withdrawal from the public sphere and the claims of economic and social justice. As Stefan Collini has argued, under the regime of neoliberalism, the “social self” has been transformed into the “disembedded individual,” just as the notion of public and higher education as a public good are now repudiated by the privatizing and atomistic values at the heart of a hyper-market driven society. I would think that in a time of systemic violence and terror, the individualizing of the social, the militarization of everyday life, and the ever present policies of permanent warfare overtaking the globe, that faculty would do more than retreat into the cult of professionalism, the impenetrable jargon of specialization, or succumb to the seductions of corporate power.

Some academics such as Stanley Fish claim that faculty should not address important social issues in either their research or teaching. To do so is to run the risk of not only becoming incapable of defending public and higher education as a vital public sphere, but also of having no influence over the conditions of their own intellectual labour. Without their intervention as public intellectuals, education defaults on its role as a democratic public sphere willing to produce an informed public, enact and sustain a culture of questioning, and enable a critical formative culture that advances not only the power of the imagination but also what Kristen Case calls moments of classroom grace. Pedagogies of classroom grace allows students to reflect critically on commonsense understandings of the world, and begin to question, however troubling, their sense of agency, relationship to others, and their relationship to the larger world. This is a pedagogy that asks why we have wars, massive inequality, a surveillance state, the commodification of everything, and the collapse of the public into the private. This is not merely a methodical consideration but also a moral and political practice because it presupposes that the creation of critically engaged students can imagine a future in which justice, equality, freedom, and democracy

matter. Gayatri Spivak is right in asking academics the question: “Can one insist on the importance of a training in the humanities in the time of legitimized violence?” Of course, this question applies to all levels of education and whatever subject is being taught.

HM: In your writing, you discuss how an erosion of social responsibility, public values and community is shaping everyday life in North America. Can you comment here about everyday ways to contest neoliberal hegemony?

HAG: One essential issue is to recognize that politics is not exclusively about economic power or what might be called the financialization of all aspects of society. It is also about culture, the politics of subjectivity, or what can be called the educative nature of politics itself. The left, for the most part, has ignored the importance of education being central to politics because it refuses to acknowledge matters concerning how right-wing formative cultures work to produce subjects that internalize their own oppression as a political issue and not merely an academic one.

The issue of politics being educative, of recognizing that matters of pedagogy, subjectivity, desire, and consciousness are at the heart of political and moral concerns should not be lost on academics and students. As the late Pierre Bourdieu argued, it is important for all of us to recognize that the most important forms of domination are not only economic but also intellectual and pedagogical, and lie on the side of belief and persuasion. This suggests that it is crucial to recognize that academics and other cultural workers bear an enormous responsibility for challenging this form of domination. The late Stuart Hall’s remarks are instructive here. He recently insisted that the state of progressive thought is in jeopardy in that, as he puts it, “The left is in trouble. It’s not got any ideas, it’s not got any independent analysis of its own, and therefore it’s got no vision. It just takes the temperature...It has no sense of politics being educative, of politics changing the way people see things.”³ Of course, Hall is not suggesting the left has no ideas to speak of. He is suggesting that such ideas are often removed from the larger issue of what it means to address education and the production and reception of meaningful ways of thinking as a pedagogical practice that is central to politics itself. He is also saying that the left and progressives are often short of ideas that can move people. In other words, there is no sense of how to make ideas meaningful in order to make them critical and transformative. Theoretically, this means that educators and others can work

³ Williams, Z. (2012, February 11). The Saturday Interview: Stuart Hall, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2012/feb/11/saturday-interview-stuart-hall>

to create public spaces where desires, subjectivities, and identities can be produced capable of fostering critical and engaged individual and social agents. Such struggles demand a new notion of politics, one in which progressives work with social movements to create educational apparatuses dedicated to creating new political formations capable of challenging neoliberal notions of commonsense through a discourse of both critique and possibility. Neoliberalism produces anti-public spaces that function as disimagination zones, spaces that produce forms of social and civic death. Academics and others must reclaim the radical imagination by rethinking the crucial relationship among cultural institutions, power, and everyday life. Given the assault on both subjectivity and popular needs, it is crucial to reinvent the meaning of democracy, create a comprehensive vision of change, and develop new political formations that are international in scope.

HM: Many of my peers are piecing together a living as contract faculty, researchers and part-time workers in other sectors. What are your thoughts on working towards labour equity and social justice for all university workers? Can you comment on strategies for greater reciprocity and solidarity with workers in other labour networks?

HAG: I think working towards labour equity and social justice for all university workers is a noble and important ideal because it provides a discourse for organizing diverse groups of workers in the academy around a number of common themes. At the same time, it forces such groups to redefine the nature and purpose of education and why it is so central to any viable notion of politics and change. In addition, such struggles point to the need for academics and others to build alliances with other groups and social movements outside of the university as part of a more comprehensive struggle not just for education as a public good but for expanding and deepening the struggle for democracy itself. The left historically has been too fragmented, mired in often strangulating forms of identity politics that become zones of political purity that shut down rather than open up possibilities for new alliances and broader movements while retaining the spirit of specific struggles. Particular struggles for freedom must be aligned with more general struggles so a broad based political formation can be developed to offset neoliberal hegemony and global power relations.

HM: I am currently a university researcher in the UK where public research funders are pressuring academics to prove their usefulness in terms of developing partnerships with civil society groups, public-private partnerships, 'regeneration' initiatives and community organizations

to name a few. Does this emphasis on ‘impact’ undermine the work of public intellectuals? Or does it open up new contradictions or spaces for critique and critical engagement?

HAG: I think it does both. Surely, the current governments in the US, UK, and Australia view such alliances as a way to consolidate corporate control over the university, faculty, the academic fields, and students. At the same time, the ideologies driving these counter-reforms can be a challenge for the misery, powerlessness, and damage they do to any democratic society and in doing so hopefully new alliances can be opened up with a range of groups that can assume a less instrumental and more democratic role in such alliances.

HM: What are your thoughts on the role of artistic practice as a radical pedagogical strategy in a moment when universities, think tanks and arts institutions are caught up in the ‘buzz’ of neoliberal ‘creative city’ and ‘innovation’ regimes?

HAG: Neoliberalism kills the radical imagination which is crucial to any real definition of creativity so central to artistic public spheres. Surely, neoliberal attempts to colonize the arts and to turn them into a hegemonic pedagogical force for imposing modes of political conformity must be challenged on both political and pedagogical grounds. Crucial here is the need for academics, artists, and other cultural workers to provide an alternative understanding of the potential of the arts as a radical pedagogical practice and strategy. The attempts to colonize the arts as an extension of neoliberal public pedagogy and repression testifies to how cultural apparatuses have become increasingly responsible for the darkness that surrounds us. This recognition points to more than despair, it also opens up the possibilities for new alliances with artists and other cultural workers while extending the power of radical pedagogical practices.

The New Brutalism in Higher Education

Henry A. Giroux¹

ABSTRACT: In spite of its broad-based, even global, recognition, higher education in the United States is currently being targeted by a diverse number of right-wing forces, which have hijacked political power and have waged a focused campaign to undermine the principles of academic freedom, sacrifice critical pedagogical practice in the name of economic growth, and dismantle the university as a bastion of autonomy, independent thought, and uncorrupted inquiry. The article argues that under the material and affective assaults of neoliberalism, higher education across the globe is experiencing an unprecedented attack on its role as a democratic public sphere. At stake in this struggle is a concerted attempt by right-wing extremists and corporate interests to strip the professoriate of any authority, render critical pedagogy as merely an instrumental task, eliminate tenure as a protection for teacher authority, define students as consumers, produce a form of indebted citizenship, and remove critical reason from any vestige of civic courage, engaged citizenship, and social responsibility. The article offers both a critique and some suggestions about how such an attack can be collectively resisted, especially by those of us working in the universities.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Neoliberalism, United States, Academic Freedom, Critical Pedagogy

Across the globe, a new historical conjuncture is emerging in which the attacks on higher education as a democratic institution and on dissident public voices in general—whether journalists, whistleblowers, or academics—are intensifying with sobering consequences. The attempts to punish prominent academics such as Ward Churchill and Steven Salaita and others are matched by an equally vicious assault on whistleblowers

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such as Chelsea Manning, Jeremy Hammond, Edward Snowden, as well as on journalists such as James Risen.² Under the aegis of the national surveillance-security-secrecy state, it becomes difficult to separate the war on whistleblowers and journalists from the war on higher education – the institutions responsible for safeguarding and sustaining critical theory and engaged citizenship.³

Marina Warner has rightly called these assaults on higher education, “the new brutality in academia” (Warner, 2014). It may be worse than she suggests. In fact, the right-wing defense of the neoliberal dismantling of the university as a site of critical inquiry in many countries is more brazen and arrogant than anything we have seen in the past and its presence is now felt in a diverse number of repressive regimes. For instance, the authoritarian nature of neoliberalism and its threat to higher education as a democratic public spheres was on full display recently when the multi-millionaire and Beijing-appointed leader of Hong Kong, Leung Chunying, told pro-democracy protesters that “allowing his successors to be chosen in open elections based on who won the greatest number of votes was unacceptable in part because it risked giving poorer residents a dominant voice in politics” (Bradsher and Buckley, 2014). Offering an unyielding defense for China’s authoritarian political system, he argued that any candidate that might succeed him “must be screened by a ‘broadly representative’ nominating committee, which would insulate Hong Kong’s next chief executive from popular pressure to create social provisions and allow the government to implement more business-friendly policies to address economic” issues (ibid). This is not just an attack on political liberty but also an attack on dissent, critical education, and public institutions that might exercise a democratizing influence on the nation. In this case the autonomy of institutions such as higher education are threatened as much by corporate interests as by the repressive policies and practices of the state.

² For the war on academics see Giroux, 2007; 2014. For an analysis of the war on journalists, see Radack, 2012

³ There is nothing new about the squashing of dissent in the United States and the complicity of liberals in such acts of repression. While I have not focused on this history, it is well to remember that the suppression of dissent is not a recent phenomenon. The sordid attacks against Scott Nearing, Paul Sweezy, Paul Piccone, and dozens of leftists who were fired just before and after World War II, including the sixties, represents a glaring indictment of a history that is being repeated. As a number of intellectuals such as Robert Lynd, I.F. Stone and others have pointed out, it is hard to overlook the morally and politically poisonous role that liberals such as Schlesinger, Reuther, almost the entire group of “New York Intellectuals,” as well as most universities, unions and liberal organizations, played in suppressing dissent in a wide variety of fields.

The hidden notion of politics that fuels this market-driven ideology also informs a more Western-style form of neoliberalism in which the autonomy of democratizing institutions are under assault not only by the state but also by the ultra-rich, bankers, hedge fund managers, and the corporate elite. In this case, corporate sovereignty has replaced traditional state modes of governance and can be seen in attempts by powerful corporate elites to both undermine the common good and dismantle higher education's democratizing influence on American society. As the South African Nobel Prize winner in literature, JM Coetzee, points out, the new power elite "reconceive of themselves as managers of national economies" who want to turn universities into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy" (Coetzee, 2013). Viewed as a private investment rather than a public good, universities are now construed as spaces where students are valued as human capital, courses are determined by consumer demand, and governance is based on the Walmart model of labor relations. For Coetzee, this attack on higher education, which is not only ideological but also increasingly relies on the repressive, militaristic arm of the punishing state, is a response to the democratization and opening up of universities to a more multiracial, diverse, and empowered spectrum of working and middle-class students that reached a highpoint in the 1960s all across the globe. In the last forty years, the assault on the university as a center of critique and democratization has intensified, just as the reach of this assault has expanded to include intellectuals, campus protesters, an expanding number of minority students, and the critical formative cultures that provide the foundation for a substantive democracy.⁴

In the United States and England, in particular, the ideal of the university as vital public good no longer fits into a revamped discourse of progress, largely defined in terms of economic growth. Under the onslaught of a merciless and savage financialization of society that has spread since the 1970s, the concept of social progress has all but disappeared amid the ideological onslaught of a crude market-driven fundamentalism that promises instant gratification, consumption, and immediate financial gain. If dissident intellectuals were the subject of right wing attacks in the past, the range and extent of the attack on higher education has widened and become more insidious. As Ellen Schrecker (2010, 3) succinctly notes:

⁴ For an excellent analysis of the conservative reaction to the growing democratization of the university from the sixties on, see Newfield, 2008.

“Today the entire enterprise of higher education, not just its dissident professors, is under attack, both internally and externally. The financial challenges are obvious, as are the political ones. Less obvious, however, are the structural changes that have transformed the very nature of American higher education. In reacting to the economic insecurities of the past forty years, the nation’s colleges and universities have adopted corporate practices that degrade undergraduate instruction, marginalize faculty members, and threaten the very mission of the academy as an institution devoted to the common good.”

Memories of the university as a citadel of democratic learning have been replaced by a university eager to define itself largely in as an adjunct of corporate power. Civic freedom has been reduced to the notion of consumption, education has been reduced to a form of training, and agency has been narrowed to the consumer logic of choice legitimated by a narrow belief in defining one’s goals almost entirely around self-interests rather than shared responsibilities of democratic sociability. Education is increasingly reduced to a form of instrumental rationality that kills the imagination, and exorcises any attempt to connect pedagogy to the goal of educating students to be thoughtful, civically courageous, politically engaged, and complex critical thinkers.

Coetzee’s defense of education provides an important referent for those of us who believe that the university is nothing if it is not a public trust and social good; that is, a critical institution infused with the promise of cultivating intellectual insight, the civic imagination, inquisitiveness, risk-taking, social responsibility, and the struggle for justice. Rather than defining the mission of the university in terms that mimic markets based ideologies, modes of governance, and neoliberal policies, the questions that should be asked at this crucial time in American history concern how the mission of the university might be better understood with respect to both developing and safeguarding the interests of young people at a time of violence and war, the rise of a rampant anti-intellectualism, the emerging specter of authoritarianism, and the threat of nuclear and ecological devastation. What might it mean to define the university as a public good and democratic public sphere rather than as an institution that has aligned itself with market values and is more attentive to market fluctuations and investor interests than educating students to be critically engaged citizens? Or, as Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis (2013, 139) write: “how will we form the next generation of...intellectuals and politicians if young people will never have an opportunity to experience what a non-vulgar, non-pragmatic, non-instrumentalized university is

like?" Even worse, how can students become critically engaged agents if they constantly subjected to the effective spaces of neoliberalism which promote a immobilizing hedonism, suffocating narcissism, culture of glitter, the endless commodification of everything, and a tawdry privatization. Under neoliberalism's regime of affective and ideological management, youth are inducted into the cultures of Wall Street, silicon valley, and the idiocy of celebrity culture where all the young men and women wear what Richard Rodriguez (2014) calls "an astonishing vacancy." What role will higher education play in fighting against the disavowal of democratic and egalitarian impulses and the denegation of public values, goods, and the promises of a radical democracy?

With the advance of a savage form of casino capitalism and its dreamworlds of consumption, privatization, and deregulation, not only are democratic values and social protections at risk, but also the civic and formative cultures that make such values and protections intelligible and consequential to a sustainable democratic society. As public spheres, once enlivened by broad engagements with common concerns, are being transformed into "spectacular spaces of consumption" and financial looting, the flight from mutual obligations and social responsibilities strengthens and has resulted not only in a devaluing of public life and the common good, but also in a crisis of the radical imagination, especially in terms of rethinking the purpose, meaning, and value of politics itself (Kurlantzick, 2013). Moreover, not only have academic fields become financialized but so has time and space. Students now labor under time constraints marked by the speeding up of time to pay off debts, the choosing of spaces and spheres of labor that offer quick returns – all done in the name of an indentured form of citizenship predicated on consuming and going into debt. And the consequences far exceed the more volatile examples of the violence waged by police on student protesters.

Another index of such a crisis, as Mike Davis point out, is that we live in an era in which there is a super saturation of corruption, cruelty, and violence" that fails any longer to outrage or even interest" (cited in Fisher, 2009, 11). Moral outrage has been replaced by the shouting and screaming that is symptomatic of talk radio and television shows whose purpose is to replace critical dialogue with a cartoonish spectacle in which evidence and argument dissolve in opinions expressed in deafening volume. This type of celebrated illiteracy finds its counterpart in university commencement speeches often delivered by business icons such as Bill Gates, or more problematically, celebrities who confirm

the triumph of anti-intellectualism consumerism over thoughtfulness, social responsibility, and the ethical imagination. Rarely are students in such commencements exposed to writers, journalists, artists, and other cultural workers who believe in the public good, fight against injustices, and dare at the risk of their jobs, and sometimes their lives, to hold power accountable.

Needless to say, the crisis of higher education is about much more than a crisis of funding, an assault on dissent, the emergence of a deep-seated anti-intellectualism, or its service to the financial elite, it is also about a crisis of memory, agency, and politics. What Mike Davis is suggesting is that politics has been emptied out of its political, moral, and ethical registers – stripped down to a machine of social and political death for whom the cultivation of the imagination is a hindrance. Commerce is the heartbeat of social relations, and the only mode of governance that matters is one that mimics Wall Street.

We live in the age of a new brutality marked not simply by an indifference to multiple social problems, but also defined by a kind of mad delight in the spectacle and exercise of violence, permanent war, militarism, and cruelty. America is sullied by a brutality that is perfectly consistent with a new kind of barbaric power, one that puts millions of people in prison, subjects an entire generation to a form of indentured citizenship, and strips people of the material and symbolic resources they need to exercise their capacity to live with dignity and justice. Academics who speak out against corruption and injustice are often censored and sometimes lose their jobs, proving that dissent has become a dangerous activity. At the same time, the Obama administration criminalizes public servants who expose unethical behavior, the violation of civil liberties, and corruption. One egregious and symptomatic case reported by Morris Berman took place in 2011 when “environmental activist Tim DeChristopher was sentenced to two years in prison for his repeated declaration that environmental protection required civil, i.e., nonviolent disobedience” (Berman, 2012). As Berman points out, one wonders if the judge that sentenced DeChristopher to prison “would also have put Rosa Parks and Mahatma Gandhi in jail, had he been around their lifetimes” (ibid). If democratic political life is emptied out by the rise of the national security apparatus, the increasing criminalization of dissent, and the ongoing militarization of everyday life, it is equally devalued and threatened by modes of public pedagogy, circulating in Fox News, for example, that trade in lies, ignorance, and a full-fledged attack on reason and critical thought.

In this instance, the new barbarism produces and sanctions a civic illiteracy and retrograde consumer consciousness in which students are taught to mimic the economic success of alleged “brands” such as the reality TV star, Kim Kardashian. Her celebrity is promoted around a kind of idiocy, as exemplified in the publicity surrounding the publication of her new book, *Selfish*, the unique selling feature of which is that it contains 2,000 selfies. The challenge for higher education in this debacle goes beyond refusing to produce modes of agency that embrace this kind of deadly anti-intellectualism and rabid individualism, but to enable students to critically interrogate what stands for public engagement, and how this debased mode of being in the world gains prominence in the public sphere. More importantly, what obligation does a university have to teach students to judge the character of their society not by the lives of celebrities, new technologies, or the endless production of needless consumer goods, but by its intellect, reason, compassion for the poor, social investment in young people, and its willingness to provide economic support and social provisions for all, including those marginalized by race, class, gender, and sexual orientation? How we treat those considered vulnerable says much more about the state of a democratic society and the institutions that support it than how we treat the rich, celebrities, and those who either trivialize democracy or intentionally undermine it for their own benefit. There is no way to escape the relationship between education and power, pedagogy and social justice, knowledge and the production of the ethical and civic imagination. These neoliberal agendas have sought ways to mystify and undermine these connections.

As the corporatization of higher education intensifies, there is little talk in this view of higher education about the history and value of shared governance between faculty and administrators, nor of educating students as critical citizens rather than potential employees of Walmart. There are few attempts to affirm faculty as scholars and public intellectuals who have a measure of autonomy and power. Instead, faculty members are defined less as intellectuals than as technicians and grant writers or they are punished for raising their voices against various injustices. Students fare no better in this debased form of education and are treated as either clients, consumers, or as restless children in need of high-energy entertainment—as was made clear in the 2012 Penn State scandal and the ever increasing football scandals at major universities, where testosterone fuelled entertainment is given a higher priority than

substantive teaching and learning – to say nothing of student safety and protection.

Precious resources are now wasted by universities intent on building football stadiums, student dorms that mimic resort hotels, and other amenities that signal the Disneyfication of higher education for students and the Walmartification of labor relations for faculty. For instance, High Point University seeks to attract students with its first-run movie theater, ever present ice cream trucks, a steakhouse, outdoor hot tubs, and dorms with plasma-screen TVs” (Matlack, 2012). Such modes of education do not foster a sense of organized responsibility fundamental to a democracy. Instead, they encourage what might be called a sense of organized irresponsibility – a practice that underlies the economic Darwinism and civic corruption at the heart of a debased politics of consumption, finance, and privatization. When one combines the university as a Disneyfied entertainment center with labor practices that degrade and exploit faculty the result is what Terry Eagleton recently calls the “death of universities as centers of critique” (Eagleton, 2010).

Governance under higher education is being stripped of any viable democratic vision. In the United States, college presidents pride themselves on defining their role almost entirely in a vocabulary that mimics the language of Wall Street and hedge fund managers. With few exceptions, they are praised as fund raisers but rarely acknowledged for the quality of their ideas. Moreover, trustees have not only assumed more power in higher education, but are largely drawn from the ranks of business, and, yet as in the Steven Salaita case, are making judgments about faculty that they are unqualified to make.

For those of us who believe that education is more than an extension of the business world marked by a new brutality, it is crucial to address a number of issues that connect the university to the larger society while stressing the educative nature of politics as part of a broader effort to create a critical culture, supportive institutions, and a collective movement that supports the connection between critique and action and redefines agency in the service of the practice of freedom and justice. Let me mention just a few.

First, educators can address and make clear the relationship between the attack on the social state and the transformation of higher education into an adjunct of corporate power. The attack on higher education cannot be understood outside of the attack on the welfare state, social provisions, public servants, and democratic public spheres. Nor can it be understood outside of the production of the neoliberal subject, one who

is atomized, unable to connect private issues to larger public considerations, and is taught to believe in a form of radical individualism that enables a fast withdrawal from the public sphere and the claims of economic and social justice. As Stefan Collini has argued, under the regime of neoliberalism, the “social self” has been transformed into the “disembedded individual,” just as the notion of the university as a public good is now repudiated by the privatizing and atomistic values at the heart of a hyper-market driven society.⁵ Clearly, in any democratic society, education should be viewed as a right, not an entitlement. This suggests a reordering of state and federal priorities to make that happen. Much needed revenue can be raised by putting into play even a limited number of reform policies in which, for instance, the upper 10 percent and corporations would be forced to pay a fair share of their taxes; a tax could also be placed on trade transactions; and tax loopholes for the wealthy would be eliminated. It is well known that the low tax rate given to corporations is a major scandal. For instance, and this is only one egregious example, the Bank of America paid no taxes in 2010 and “got \$1.9 billion tax refund from the IRS, even though it made \$4.4 billion in profits” (Snyder, 2013).

In addition, academics can join with students, public schools teachers, unions, and others to bring attention to wasteful military spending that if eliminated could provide the funds for a free public higher education for every qualified young person in the country. Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies has done extensive research on military spending and the costs of war and states that as a result of the Iraqi war alone “American taxpayers will ultimately spend roughly \$2.2 trillion on the war, but because the U.S. government borrowed to finance the conflict, interest payments through the year 2053 means that the total bill could reach nearly \$4 trillion” (Armbruster, 2013; Watson Institute, 2013). While there is growing public concern over rising tuition rates along with the crushing debt students are incurring, there is little public outrage from academics over the billions of dollars wasted on a massive and wasteful military budget and arms industry. As Rabbi Michael Lerner of *Tikkun* has pointed out, democracy needs a Marshall Plan in which funding is sufficient to make all levels of education free, while also providing enough social support to eliminate poverty, hunger, inadequate health care, and the destruction of the environment.⁶ There

⁵ These two terms are taken from Collini, 2014, 1-2.

⁶ For *Tikkun*’s Marshall Plan, see http://spiritualprogressives.org/newsite/?page_id=114

is nothing utopian about the demand to redirect money away from the military, powerful corporations, and the upper 1 percent.

Second, addressing these tasks demands a sustained critique of the transformation of a market economy into a market society along with a clear analysis of the damage it has caused both at home and abroad. Power, particularly the power of the largest corporations, has become more unaccountable and “the subtlety of illegitimate power makes it hard to identify” (George, 2014). The greatest threat posed by authoritarian politics is that it makes power invisible and hence defines itself in universal and commonsense terms, as if it is beyond critique and dissent. Moreover, disposability has become the new measure of a savage form of casino capitalism in which the only value that matters is exchange value. Compassion, social responsibility, and justice are relegated to the dustbin of an older modernity that now is viewed as either quaint or a grim reminder of a socialist past. This suggests, as Angela Davis, Michelle Alexander, and others have argued that there is a need for academics and young people to become part of a broader social movement aimed at dismantling the repressive institutions that make up the punishing state. The most egregious example of which is the prison-industrial complex, which drains billions of dollars in funds to put people in jail when such resources could be used to fund public and higher education. As Ferguson makes painfully clear, the police have become militarized, armed with weapons from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan (Balko, 2013; Nelson, 2010). The United States prison system locks up more people than any other country in the world, and the vast majority of them are people of color (Alexander, 2010). Moreover, public schools are increasingly modeled after prisons and are implementing policies in which children are arrested for throwing peanuts at a school bus or violating a dress code (Giroux, 2012). The punishing state is a dire threat to both public and higher education and democracy itself. The American public does not need more prisons; it needs more schools, accessible, low cost health services, and a living wage for all workers. This type of analysis suggests that progressives and others need a more comprehensive understanding of how politics and power are interrelated, of how different registers of oppression mutually inform each other and can be better understood in terms of their connections and deeply historical and social relations. This suggests that educators and other progressives need to develop a more comprehensive view of society and the mutually informing registers of politics, oppression, and political struggle. There is a noble and informing example of this type of analysis in the work of

theorists such as Stanley Aronowitz, Angela Davis, and the late Martin Luther King, Jr., who drew connections between militarism, racism and capitalism as part of is call not for reform but for a radical restructuring of American society.

Third, academics, artists, journalists and other young people need to connect the rise of subaltern, part-time labor – or what we might call the Walmart model of model of wealth and labor relations – in both the university and the larger society to the massive inequality in wealth and income that now corrupts every aspect of American politics and society. No democracy can survive the kind of inequality in which “the 400 richest people...have as much wealth as 154 million Americans combined, that’s 50 percent of the entire country [while] the top economic 1 percent of the U.S. population now has a record 40 percent of all wealth and more wealth than 90 percent of the population combined” (DeGraw, 2011). Senator Bernie Sanders (2014) provides a startling statistical map of the massive inequality at work in the United States. In a speech to the U.S. Senate, he states:

“Today...the top 1% owns 38% of the financial wealth of America, 38%. And I wonder how many Americans know how much the bottom 60% own. They want people to think about it. Top 1% own 38% of the wealth. What do the bottom 60% own? The answer is all of 2.3%. Top 1% owns 38% of the financial wealth. The bottom 60% owns 2.3%. Madam President, there is one family in this country, the Walton family, the owners of Wal-Mart, who are now worth as a family \$148 billion. That is more wealth than the bottom 40% of American society. One family owns more wealth than the bottom 40% of American society...That’s distribution of wealth. That’s what we own. In terms of income, what we made last year, the latest information that we have in terms of distribution of income is that from 2009-2012, 95% of all new income earned in this country went to the top 1%. Have you all got that? 95% of all new income went to the top 1%, which tells us that when we talk about economic growth, which is 2%, 3%, 4%, whatever it is, that really doesn’t mean all that much because almost all of the new income generated in that growth has gone to the very, very, very wealthiest people in this country.”

Democracy in the United States is has been hijacked by a free-floating class of ultra-rich and corporate powerbrokers and transformed into an oligarchy “where power is effectively wielded by a small number

of individuals” (McKay, 2014). At least, this is the conclusion of a recent Princeton University study, and at the risk of being charged with hyperbole, the report may be much too moderate in its conclusions.

Fourth, academics need to fight for the rights of students to get a free education, be given a formidable and critical education not dominated by corporate values, and to have a say in the shaping of their education and what it means to expand and deepen the practice of freedom and democracy. Many countries such as Germany, France, Denmark, Cuba, and Brazil post-secondary education is free because these countries view education not as a private right but as a public good. Yet, in some of the most advanced countries in the world such as the United States and Canada, young people, especially from low income groups are being systemically excluded from access to higher education and, in part, this is because they are left out of the social contract and the discourse of democracy. They are the new disposables who lack jobs, a decent education, hope, and any semblance of a life better than that of their parents. They are a reminder of how finance capital has abandoned any viable vision of a better future for young people. Youth have become a liability in the world of high finance, a world that refuses to view them as important social investments. And the consequences are terrifying. As Jennifer M. Silva points out in her brilliant book, *Coming Up Short*, coming of age for young people “is not just being delayed but fundamentally dismantled by drastic economic restructure, profound cultural transformations, and deepening social inequality” (Silva, 2013, 10) The futures of young people are being refigured or reimagined in ways that both punish and depoliticize them. Silva writes that many young people are turning away from politics, focusing instead on the purely personal and emotional vocabularies of self-help and emotional self-management. As she (*ibid*) puts it:

“...this emerging working-class adult self is characterized by low expectations of work, wariness toward romantic commitment, widespread distrust of social institutions, profound isolation from others, and an overriding focus on their emotions and psychic health.... [They] are working hard to remake dignity and meaning out of emotional self-management and willful psychic transformation.”

Finally, though far from complete, there is a need to oppose the ongoing shift in power relations between faculty and the managerial class. Too many faculty are now removed from the governing structure

of higher education and as a result have been abandoned to the misery of impoverished wages, excessive classes, no health care, and few, if any, social benefits. As political scientist Benjamin Ginsburg points out, administrators and their staffs now outnumber full time faculty accounting for two-thirds of the increase in higher education costs in the past 20 years. This is shameful and is not merely an education issue but a deeply political matter, one that must address how neoliberal ideology and policy has imposed on higher education an anti-democratic governing structure.

We may live in the shadow of the authoritarian corporate state, but the future is still open. The time has come to develop a political language in which civic values and social responsibility—and the institutions, tactics, and long-term commitments that support them – become central to invigorating and fortifying a new era of civic engagement, a renewed sense of social agency, and an impassioned international social movement with the vision, organization, and set of strategies capable of challenging the neoliberal nightmare that now haunts the globe and empties out the meaning of politics and democracy.

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Neoliberal Standardization and Its Discontents: An Interview with Diane Ravitch

Christopher Bailey

Chris Bailey¹ (CB): You have worked in the U.S. Department of Education in various capacities since 1991. What attracted you to that institution? And what were some of your impressions of the education policies produced by that organization?

Diane Ravitch² (DR): I worked in the U.S. Department of Education from mid-1991 to January 1993. I was invited to be Assistant Secretary for Education Research by Lamar Alexander, who was Secretary of Education for President George H.W. Bush. I accepted his invitation because I was excited by the opportunity to learn about federal policy and Congress. During the time I was there, we pushed for voluntary national standards. We encouraged their creation by funding professional organizations of teachers and scholars. Standards were produced, but they didn't have much traction at the time because of the huge furor over the history standards.

CB: What was the rationale behind your initial support for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy under G.W. Bush, and why did you eventually leave your position in the U.S. Department of Education to become one of the more vocal critics of neoliberal education reform in the USA?

¹ Chris Bailey is a PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science and member of the Global Labour Research Centre at York University. His doctoral research is a comparison of neoliberal restructuring of K-12 public education in Ontario and British Columbia as well as teachers' union struggles against neoliberal restructuring in both provinces.

² Diane Ravitch is Research Professor of Education at New York University and a historian of education. From 1991 to 1993, she was Assistant Secretary of Education and Counsellor to Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. She was responsible for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education. As Assistant Secretary, she led the federal effort to promote the creation of voluntary state and national academic standards.

DR: I left the U.S. Department of Education when the first Bush administration ended. I spent three years at the Brookings Institution, where I wrote a book about national standards, then went to New York University in 1995, where I have been ever since. During the 1990s and early 2000s, I was part of three conservative think tanks – the Manhattan Institute, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, and the Koret Task Force at the Hoover Institution. I was deeply engaged with the last two, and became convinced over time that No Child Left Behind was a failure. I also became convinced that charter schools had become a vehicle for privatization. I became increasingly alienated from the other board members and eventually became a full-fledged critic of these policies. I wrote a book about it called *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, which came out in 2010; I began researching and writing it in 2006 or 2007.

CB: What are the origins of the movement to privatize public education in the U.S.? Are there any important similarities or differences between Bush’s NCLB and the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative under Obama? How is public education currently funded under these programs?

DR: The privatization movement began with economist Milton Friedman’s proposal for vouchers in 1955. Vouchers were a favorite cause of the far-right fringe for many years. However, the public never voted for vouchers, largely because of opposition to funding religious schools. In the early 1990s, the rightwing turned to charters as its substitute for vouchers. Both were a way of promoting the transfer of public funds to private hands. The charter movement began with liberal support, especially from the Clinton administration. They were seen as innovative. But the right cheered them and eventually became their strongest supporters.

There is not much difference between NCLB and RTTT. They both promote high-stakes testing and privately managed charters. RTTT is actually worse, however, because it was sponsored by a Democratic president, our first Black president, who showed a strong preference for charters, not public schools. This gave cover to Democrats in many states to support the neoliberal agenda. RTTT also insisted upon the evaluation of teachers by the test scores of their students. Secretary of Education Duncan punished states that did not accept this strategy, even though it mislabelled teachers, demoralized teachers, and has not worked anywhere it has been applied. Duncan also heavily promoted the Common Core standards and funded tests for these standards. They

have been highly controversial, having attracted opposition from the right and the left, and from teachers.

CB: Can you signal some of the key features of the neoliberal education reform movement in the U.S.? How does this movement serve to undermine public education?

DR: The key features of neoliberal education reform are 1) a heavy reliance on standardized testing; 2) a willingness to eliminate collective bargaining and tenure; 3) a hostility to public education as such; 4) a preference for privately managed charter schools; 5) support for attacks on the teaching profession, including hostility to tenure and professionalism; 6) support for alternate routes into teaching like Teach for America, whose recruits have only five weeks of training and typically leave after 2-3 years in the classroom. This movement clearly will undermine public education by taking funding from public schools to support privately managed schools and cyber schools, as well as harming teacher professionalism.

CB: Lois Wiener and Michael Apple consider the current movement to privatize public education in the U.S. to be a part of a wider international neoliberal movement to restructure public education into a profit-oriented model. How would you characterize the charter/voucher school movement within the U.S.? What are the global implications of this reform movement?

DR: I don't know whether the movement in the U.S. is international in scope. It might be. But I have no doubt that the driving force behind it is to transition to a profit-making model. This has occurred in many of our states, where for-profit organizations and individuals are siphoning off millions of dollars from public schools. In many places, public schools are starved of resources, stripped of programs, while charter schools have small classes and all the programs that were eliminated in public schools. The cybercharters are especially profitable but the quality of education provided by computer is very poor. Nonetheless, these companies (like K12 Inc.) are profitable.

CB: An essential part of the education reform movements' rhetoric has been the demonization of the public education system and teachers' unions. Is there any merit to these accusations? Why do you think teachers' unions are being blamed?

DR: There is no merit to the accusations made about either public education or the unions. These accusations are part of the neoliberal effort to destroy public education and to leave teachers powerless.

CB: In past articles you've suggested several education reforms to combat chronic problems within public education in the U.S. How can we fight racial segregation and class stratification via progressive education reform? Do reforms need to extend beyond curriculum and classroom conditions? Would this also require progressive reforms to healthcare and welfare?

DR: The leadership to end racial segregation must come from the federal government and state governments. There will be no progressive reforms without progressive leadership. Unfortunately, our current leadership is entirely neoliberal, not only in the federal government but in usually progressive states like New York and Connecticut, whose governors are indistinguishable from conservative Republicans on education issues. Our Secretary of Education Arne Duncan bemoans racial segregation, yet hails charter schools that are completely segregated without seeing any contradiction. I have often wondered why he didn't take the \$5 billion devoted to Race to the Top and award it to districts that promoted desegregation. As I wrote in my last book *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*, true reform must involve not only the schools but government and social policy. That is not happening, but I think it must happen.

CB: In light of some recent examples of fight back against the education reform movement by teachers unions, students and community members in Chicago, L.A. and Wisconsin, what are your thoughts regarding the viability of mounting popular challenges to the charter/voucher movement?

DR: I see a growing movement against high stakes testing and privatization. The two are intertwined. The Common Core is at the heart of the neoliberal agenda because it raises standards so high that it generates failure. The tests have passing marks so high that they are designed to fail most students. I believe the standards and tests were designed to generate failure, thereby encouraging people to seek alternatives to the public schools. At the same time, the Common Core creates huge profits for the testing industry and the tech industry, because all testing must be done online, requiring the expenditure of billions of dollars on bandwidth and new tablets and computers.

Parents and educators are waking up to the destructive wrecking ball aimed at their children, their schools, and their communities. There are more parents opting out, more teachers and administrators speaking out. I believe that this movement will grow and that neoliberal advocates will

be exposed for what they are: a tiny elite seeking to privatize our schools and profit from them. Everything they have promoted as “reform” has failed. You can’t fail your way to success.

CB: Given the vast amount of corporate funding and resources behind the charter/voucher movement, what are some concrete strategies that supporters of public education could employ to fight back?

DR: The corporate and philanthropic funding is huge, but the numbers of those pushing neoliberalism are small. If we are still a democracy, and I believe and hope we are, those fighting this agenda must organize and educate the public. That is what we are best at: public education. If parents, teachers, and activists grow their movement, they – we – will win. Our numbers are vast. Their numbers are puny. I have often thought that if they called a meeting of all the so-called reformers, they might convene 25,000 people, maybe less – and most of them would be employees of the movement itself. We have millions of teachers and administrators, and tens of millions of parents. Our great strength are students and parents. They can speak out and no one can fire them. They work for our movement without being paid because they work from conviction, not with hope of profit. Conviction will triumph because we will outlive them and outlast them. If their profits dry up, they will go away. We will not.

Beyond Education, Brains and Hard Work: The Aspirations and Career Trajectory of Two Black Young Men

Carl E. James¹

ABSTRACT: It is commonly accepted that through education, intellectual ability, and hard work, individuals will attain the education and careers to which they aspire. With reference to this neoliberal ethos, I use case studies of two African Canadian young men from the same stigmatized neighbourhood to examine their social, educational and occupational experiences, aspirations and achievements. The findings indicate that while equally ambitious, determined and university educated, one of the young men successfully attained his career goal immediately after graduating from university while the other still waits to achieve the same more than two years after graduation.

KEYWORDS: Education, Neoliberalism, African Canadians, Neighbourhood Stigma, Agency, Structure

INTRODUCTION

A 2011 edition of *Forbes* magazine featured an article by Gene Marks (2011), “If I were a poor Black kid,” in which he referenced President Obama’s “excellent speech” a week earlier about the possibilities of social mobility for working class people in America. Marks argues that “everyone in this country has a chance to succeed,” and prospects are not “impossible for those kids from the inner city.” He continues to say that “It takes brains. It takes hard work. It takes a little luck. And a little help from others. It takes the ability and the know-how to use the resources that are available. Like technology....” (ibid). Like Marks and many

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other Americans (see the feedback that his article generated²), Canadians too have long pondered why “poor black kids” do not take advantage of the educational opportunities and the technological resources available to them.

The idea that equality of opportunity exists, and that all Black youth have to do is to use their “brains,” work hard, and access necessary resources is premised on individualism, competition, personal responsibility, free choice, accountability, exercise of agency, resiliency, and strategic aspirations – all of which constitute a neoliberal ethos (Porfilio & Malott, 2008; Braedley & Luxton, 2010). Influenced by this ethos, particularly through their schooling, Black youth and their parents come to expect that the educational, social and material successes they seek will be realized. But the path to such realization is contingent on many social, institutional and structural factors beyond an individual’s control. In fact, in the case of young Black men, the neoliberal “success formula” is remarkably precarious when we take into account how race, class and gender operate in their lives.

In this article, I reference the experiences of two 29-year old African-Canadian young men, Kobe and Trevor (pseudonyms), to show how neoliberal discursive rationalities operated in their social, educational, career and aspirational trajectories. While they have grown up in the same media-branded “troubled” Toronto community, and would appear to have made “all the right moves” in terms of their efforts to attain their career aspirations and become full participating and productive citizens, their achievements are asymmetrically different. I argue that this difference cannot be explained simply by intellectual ability, level of education attained, or professional qualification, but by (probably more importantly) the complex ways in which the opportunities are afforded by the educational and occupational structures to which they had access. In proceeding, I review the principles of neoliberalism, and using critical race theory (CRT) as a rejoinder, discuss the ways in which neoliberalism obscures the effects of race, class and gender on the lives of racialized members of society. Before discussing the findings, I present the methodology followed by a brief description of the neighbourhood in which the participants grew up.

² See responses to article by C. Emdin (2011, December 20), Five lessons from the ‘If I Were a Poor Black Kid’ debate, Huffington Post; I. Gandy (2011, December 14), ‘If I Were a Poor Black Kid’: Really, Forbes? The Root; L. Peitzmann, (2011, December 13), If I were a middle aged white man. Huffington Post; and Touré (2011, December 15)

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: NEOLIBERALISM AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)

There is a generally accepted notion that individuals can attain the education they desire (as education is free), make choices, freely pursue employment opportunities, become wealthy, and take responsibility for their lives in ways that they see fit. The prevailing neoliberal ethos which informs this common-sense notion also holds that competition is an important “social good” and the “least restrictive way” of addressing and re-distributing inequitable resources (Braedley and Luxton, 2010, 8). Principally, neoliberalism is “a transnational political project” (Wacquant, 2008) that is premised on the principles of a market economy in which individuals are free to pursue wealth without the constraints a welfare state often imposes (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Wacquant, 2008). In such context, individuals and families are tasked with taking responsibility for their own care and social outcomes (Braedley and Luxton, 2010, 15). But in a context of structural inequity, the resources and opportunities to which individuals have access, and concomitantly their freedom and choices, are inevitably structured by the economic and social conditions over which they have little or no control (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Porfilio and Malott, 2008; Tabb, 2003). The sustained attempts by neoliberal advocates “to promote competition, choice, entrepreneurship, and individualism” constitute what Connel (2010, 26-27) calls a “sociocultural logic” that offers formerly excluded individuals access to opportunities without changing the existing “systems of inequality or the ideologies that sustain them” (35).

In Canada where there is an official multiculturalism policy (1971) and legislation (1988) which purport to promote “inclusive citizenship” and guarantee “value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their racial and ethnic origins, their language or religious affiliation,” minority group members continue to experience educational, social, civic and economic marginalization and exclusion (Basu, 2011, 1308; see also Reitz et al., 2009). Understandably so, since the multicultural claim of recognizing “cultural groups” (i.e. minorities) is up against the hegemonic neoliberal ideology of individualism and competition) which places responsibility for their circumstances on individuals. As a consequence, individuals attribute their social or economic circumstances to poor choices they have made, rather than to the limited, problematic or bad choices available to them. According to Luxton (2010, 172), liberalism’s “perverse form of individualism – an obstinate and persistent belief

that blames the victim by privatizing social problems”—immobilized individuals as they became resigned to the inevitability of their situation and a failure to see that they are both formed by and subjected to the prevailing values and practices of the economic, social and political structures.

In their examination of how youth are incorporated into “a global, neoliberal economic system,” Sukarieh and Tannock (2008, 304) argue that today’s youth are caught in a capitalist system which has led to the growth of large populations of unemployed, working class, poor and racialized youth, typically residing in urban settings, with worldviews, identities, and ways of life that are oppositional or peripheral to the existing social order. In this regard, educators and other youth service workers set about to make these youth “fit functionally” into society socializing them into a culture of responsibility and entrepreneurship premised on white middle-class “standardized and universalized notions” of youth development. They learn, then, that if they cannot make it in the existing employment market it is because they, “lack the skills of employability, and you should work on yourself more in order to better make it in the system” (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008, 309). They also come to know of the “ever-increasing educational requirements for jobs” which as Bills and Brown (2011, 2) contend, amounts to a practice of “credential inflation.”³

Within this neoliberal paradigm, racialized youth must wrestle with the dynamic and complex aspects of racism – a structural barrier to which critical race theorists (CRT) draw attention. Critical Race Theory is particularly useful here to understand how youth of colour fare in neoliberal contexts. By situating the experiences of people of colour at its centre, it highlights how seemingly race-neutral and colour-blind practices and policies disproportionately affect minorities (Aylward, 1999, 34). According to Howard (2008, 73), CRT holds that peoples’ experiences and opportunities are significantly shaped by their race, and that “any attempt to eradicate racial inequalities has to be centered on the socio-historical legacy of racism” which also means challenging the prevailing ideas of meritocracy, fairness, and objectivity that maintains the discriminatory and exclusionary practices in society (see also Charles, 2011; Gillborn, 2008; Stovall, 2008; Trevino, Harris and Wallace, 2011).

³ Bills and Brown (2011, 1) define credentialism as the “extent to which societies allocate individuals to slots in the occupational hierarchy on the basis of the educational qualifications that the candidates present at the point of hire.”

The “inextricable layers of racialized subordination” (Howard, 2008, 73) based on gender, social class and generational status play a significant role in determining the opportunities young people will have, the neighbourhoods in which they live, the schools they can attend, and the educational resources to which they will have access (James, 2012). Participating in the inequitable education system tends to be difficult for students who do not possess or have access to the normalized middle-class “cultural capital,” which in Yosso’s (2005, 76) words, is “an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society.” Nevertheless, as Yosso argues, Youth of Colour utilize (77) “community cultural wealth” – i.e. “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts... to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” – which enables them “to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances,” even without the “objective means” to attain their educational, occupational or social goals (78).

For young Black males, the resources and supports from their community are crucial to their journey through life; for as Walcott (2009, 75) asserts, “under the contemporary regime of the global terms of neoliberal economy and by extension... its culturally rhetorical disciplinary apparatus”, Black masculinity is always constructed as deficient. As a counter to this hegemonic cultural message of neoliberalism, Black males have to operate on a framework of masculinity that enables them to hold on to their “hopes and dreams for the future” sustained through aspirational capital, navigational skills, familial supports and community validation, whereby they are able to, in Yosso’s words (2005, 77), “challenge (resist) oppressive conditions.”

RESEARCH METHOD

Kobe and Trevor were first interviewed for two different qualitative research studies I conducted with Toronto youth over a ten-year period. I took a constructionist approach to the studies in that I used the interviews (each of about 1-1/2 to 2 hours) as opportunities to have participants engage in a process of meaning-making or “sense-making work” (Roulston, 2007, 16). As such, I was not a neutral observer simply trying to access and then represent certain truths about the participants (Stephenson, 2005). To this end, the audio-typed interviews were unstructured, hence enabling me to engage with the experiences and realities of Kobe and Trevor. In fact, as critical race theorists encourage, research with racialized participants should take an approach that captures their

stories and counter-stories in ways that incorporate their perspectives on their lives noting how they cope with and respond to their social, educational and material conditions (Fernandez, 2002; Moore, Henfield and Owens, 2008). In this regard, the case study approach with its detailed examination of a particular issue, incident or individual, not only serves to recognize and address the issues of participants' lives, it also enables a range of broad understandings that might otherwise be missed (Creswell, 1994). Notwithstanding its lack of generalizability, scholars assert that case studies can be used "to illuminate the nuanced complexity of social life in a variety of contexts" (Singer and Buford May, 2010, 305; see also Lichtman, 2013; Stake, 2000).

The study in which Kobe participated was conducted with twenty-two young men and women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who grew up in a marginalized Toronto neighbourhood. This study explored the raced experiences of African Canadian university students of Caribbean origin, their educational and career aspirations, and their perceptions of their occupational opportunities and outcomes. Participants were first interviewed in 2001 or 2002; follow-up interviews were conducted in 2006 with ten of the original respondents, and Kobe was again interviewed in 2011 for this article. First interviewed in 2002 during his third year of university, Kobe, then twenty-two years-old, was one of about three participants who were born in the Caribbean – in his case, Jamaica. He stood out initially from the other research participants, not only in his display of self-confidence, tenacity, high achievement, and the ways in which he engaged with his schooling (his teachers specifically) but also his ambivalent relationship with the community. He recognized that being from that community could be a liability, hence he would distance himself; but at the same time, he used that liability as a motivation to for his aspirations.

The study in which Trevor participated was first conducted in 2006, and was designed specifically to study the athletic motivations, experiences and aspirations of Black/African Canadian male basketball players between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight who were living in metropolitan Toronto. This study sought to answer the question: Was playing on their high school basketball team a liability or an asset for Black student-athletes? Trevor was one of twelve participants in this study and the only one that grew up in the same neighbourhood as Kobe. Trevor was initially interviewed in 2006 at the age of twenty-five during the fourth year of his university program; and again in 2011 for this article. In the initial interview with Trevor, I observed a strong tie to the

community that was unlike that of Kobe; hence my curiosity to explore their similarities and differences in terms of their educational and career paths and ambitions, and the role of the community in their lives.

While similar in many ways, such as having grown up in the same stigmatized Toronto neighbourhood, there are important differences that make this exploration of their lives of compelling interest – specifically, the ways in which they were supported by the educational system and its educators, and the privileging of particular educational and occupational interests over others. In the follow-up interviews with Kobe and Trevor, I asked about their educational achievements and occupational situation to date noting their optimism and satisfaction with how they approached the goals they had set for themselves.

Kobe and Trevor, like the other participants in the studies I conducted, represent a growing group of second-generation and generation-and-a-half Black/African-Caribbean-Canadian youth for whom the immigrant-drive and expectations of their parents have served to motivate them to do well educationally in order to be socially and economically successful. In fact, Canadian studies of Black university students (Gosine, 2008; James and Taylor, 2008) show that their educational aspirations were motivated by their sense of obligation to their immigrant parents and their desire to “give back” to their (Black) community. And although aware of the structural realities of racism and other related barriers, they maintained that with their individual efforts and willpower, and on the basis of merit “education had worked, was working, and would continue to work for them” (James and Taylor, 2008, 585). Gosine (2010, 9) contends that such logic is informed by the larger society’s neoliberal ethos of meritocracy and individualism, and “the belief that racism can be overcome by way of academic and occupational attainment, hard work, determination, and black solidarity.” In the following section, I discuss the neighbourhood in which Kobe and Trevor grew up and then go on to examine their career trajectory noting the similarities and differences in their strategies, their familial support, and their achievements to date.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Kobe and Trevor lived and attended school in one of Toronto’s “priority areas” characterized by high rates of poverty, low-income earners, public housing tenants, and high proportion of immigrants and racialized population (Hulchanski, 2007; James, 2012; Stapleton, Murphy and Xing, 2012). Established during the 1960s, the community is commonly referred to as an “urban” or “inner city” neighbourhood. But

Keil and Young's (2011, 1) term "in-between" seems more fitting, in that it is an urban space "coached between the glamour zones of the downtown neighbourhoods and the exploding single-family home suburbs and exurbs...; an area that oscillates "between unwelcome notoriety (for poverty and crime) and outright invisibility."

About eighty thousand people live in this high-density neighbourhood with a large cluster of high-rise apartment buildings and townhouses. Characteristic of what Myles and Hou (2004, 31) term a "low-income immigrant enclave", it is home to a broad representation of Canada's diverse ethno-racial population. Black/African Canadians – most of them born in Canada to Caribbean parents – make up the largest (about twenty percent) racial minority group (the next largest is South Asians – a two percent difference), but the largest racial group is Whites with nearly thirty percent of the population. It also has "one of the highest proportions of youth, sole-supported families, refugees and immigrants...of any community in Toronto" (James, 2012a, 54). Schooling issues (such as low educational achievements, high drop-out rates, and absenteeism) and social issues (such as drugs, gangs, and violence) draw wide-spread attention from educators, governments, police, and the media (Ezeonu, 2008; Lawson 2013).

Many of residents have a strong sense of loyalty, responsibility and commitment to the place they consider home. But some residents, weary of the marginalization, stigmatization and racialization, choose to leave the neighbourhood – oftentimes move to the suburbs – seeking safety, comfort and better schooling conditions for themselves and/or children. These residents, many of them first generation Canadians construct going to live in the suburbs as a marker of upward social mobility (James, 2012a; Myles and Hou, 2004).

FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

At the age of twelve, Kobe immigrated to Canada from rural Jamaica with his older sister to join his single mother who had already been living in Toronto for six years. He recalled that while he was "excited" about leaving Jamaica because of the changes that would come to his life, he was nevertheless "indifferent" about what to expect. About two years after settling in Toronto, his family moved to a rented apartment in the neighbourhood that Kobe would call home for the next ten years. Trevor, on the other hand, was born in that neighbourhood to a single mother who had also grown up in that neighbourhood. He lived with his mother, grandmother and uncle (a police officer). Trevor's mother

had immigrated as a teenager to Canada from London, England with her mother and brother.

Both young men grew up with their working mothers – Kobe’s mother worked as a legal secretary, and Trevor’s mother as a nurse – who had concerns about raising their sons in the neighbourhood. So the message the sons received from their parents about the neighbourhood was one of risk and danger – a place from which they should move as soon as possible. This rendering of the neighbourhood was somewhat consistent with that of the media and other Canadians. It is therefore understandable that Kobe would, at that time, avoid interactions with peers in the neighbourhood outside of school since he did not want “to get in trouble because of its reputation.” He also stated: “I went to school, went to track, and went home and did my homework....I had no friends in the area....I didn’t really, I guess, associate with a lot of people from the area outside of school.” But for Trevor growing up in the neighbourhood “was a blessing.” As he explained: “Growing up in [the neighbourhood] helped me by allowing me to see and feel what it was like to live in a community which did not have the best reputation. I think it helped make me a critical thinker based on the fact that I was able to experience the positive things that the community had to offer rather than just hear about the negative.”

In keeping with their determination to leave the “bad neighbourhood” for the sake of their children, especially sons, the families did move from the neighbourhood. Kobe moved about two miles away during his second year in university; and Trevor moved to the outer suburbs at the end of grade 7. As Trevor reported, his mother did not want him to “fall into the stereotype” or “become a statistic” – a reference to gang violence, shootings, and police targeting of Black youth in the neighbourhood (Ezeonu, 2008; Lawson 2013). However, Trevor was allowed to complete middle school in the neighbourhood – a request he had made to his mother because, as he said, “I didn’t think I would be comfortable going to a new school for just one year.” This enabled Trevor to spend “a lot of time” in his old neighbourhood; hence was able to maintain his friendships. But Trevor’s transfer to high school in the new suburban neighbourhood to which he had moved with his mother, was not a welcoming experience for him. He referred to his early experience in his high school as “a culture shock” which was, in part, due to the fact that it was not a “multi-cultural” neighbourhood like the one he left – residents in his new

neighbourhood were “either white or Asians.” In reflecting on his experience in his new school, Trevor said:

“I had a hard time adjusting to the new environment and fitting in with the rest of the students. I felt that I was completely different from everyone else. It seemed that the students and teachers knew about me and where I came from before I was formally introduced to any of them. I felt as if they already had their prejudgments about me before they even got to know me.”

And in our most recent interview, Trevor noted: “it seemed that they thought I should be a certain way because of where I grew up. They were expecting to see this thug or from what some people said, ‘someone more Black’.”

Trevor recalled that there were “approximately ten Black students in the entire school” when he was in grade 9. While he moved in a different academic circle, he ‘bonded’ with them because they were having “the same feelings” about the school. That bonding was also facilitated by their involvement in the school’s sports teams. In fact, as Trevor said, “all of the Black students in the school were on the sports team, whether it was basketball, volleyball, or track and field”⁴ and some of them were in special education classes “for behavioural or academic reasons” – classes in which Black students tend to be over-represented (see Toronto District School Board, 2010). Further, the recognition and related supports that Trevor and his Black peers received from their teachers for their athletic prowess were not the same in their academic programs. In fact, as Trevor observed, among his peers, “academics became secondary to athletics, and the Black students relied more on their athletic ability than on their academic ability.”

That many of the Black students were to be found on athletic teams is likely a reflection of sports being used as an intervention and pre-emptive strategy – serving as a form of social control and regulation which has become, as Spaaij (2009, 247) would argue, “a substantial aspect of the neoliberal repertoire.” For his part, complying with his mother’s desire for him “to have access to the best education” – hence their move to the suburb – Trevor resisted the effort of his coaches and peers to sell him

⁴ Trevor also added: “it seemed as though a Black student was always the star of the sports teams – usually basketball or track and field.”

on the benefits of athletics as a route toward his educational and career goals. He explained:

“I remember my basketball coach insisting that we make a videotape to send to schools in the States in hopes that I would receive a scholarship to play basketball at an American university. He also took it upon himself to give me a basketball rim to put up at my house so that I could practice. My mom was offended by this gesture, because she probably felt that me being a Black student, he should have been encouraging me more with academics instead of sports.”

Like with Trevor, sports played a role in helping Kobe negotiate and navigate his schooling environment, and to acculturate to life in Canada. During his first year in high school, Kobe was invited by his gym teacher to try out for the track team – something he gladly did with the knowledge that his school has a reputation for producing students who won athletic scholarships to U.S. universities. Kobe did become a member of his school’s track team, and he valued the opportunities that his athletic abilities and skills provided, but he had no interest in trying for an athletic scholarship.⁵ What he expected from his schooling – essentially from his teachers and coach – was support in his academic work. And as a child with an immigrant mother who had limited understanding of the educational system, it was to his teachers Kobe looked for and received help in navigating the school system. This is not to say that his mother did not do her part; she provided, according to Kobe, “a lot of the basic principles of the hard work ethic” required to get through school. In his initial interview, he also credited “the principles I learned in Jamaica” for how he was able to apply himself to his schooling and education.

Unlike Trevor, Kobe was able to identify “good” teachers with whom he could relate effectively, and who worked to address his needs and interests. Aside from his Caribbean-born teachers with whom he “had a good rapport” (given that they were able to understand and appreciate his situation as an immigrant youth from the region), Kobe credited one teacher, “who is actually...a white teacher,” for his generosity and support. Kobe felt that this teacher genuinely cared about him, saw him for who he was, and went out of his way to help Kobe. In expressing his appreciation for this teacher, Kobe mentioned that even though he

⁵ In reflecting on the plausibility of U.S athletic scholarships, Kobe reasoned that the larger population of Black people in the United States makes possible “more opportunities for... Black students.” And he added, “while there is discrimination, I think that there [the U.S.] is better, in terms of community trying to help people that are Black.”

was “the pickiest teacher [he] ever had,” he learned from this teacher “the skills to see my mistakes and that I had the ability to correct them.” Not underestimating “the socioeconomic conditions” of the neighbourhood, and believing that teachers were influenced by media and other negative representations of the neighbourhood – and by extension the students – Kobe did what he could to show that he was “someone who is pretty smart,” and had the “personal drive,” and “family support” to do well. Ostensibly, in such a context – an “urban” school with mainly disadvantaged racialized students, many of them Black – being seen as “a Black male who had potential” meant that teachers were willing to go out of their way to help. Indeed, as Kobe reported, he went from a student with “a very indifferent attitude” toward school to a scholarship student because his teachers saw “promise.” He recalled that teachers encouraged him to take advanced-level courses (as opposed to general-level courses) which prepared him for university.

Even though, as Kobe suggested that schools such as his were more likely to get “bad teachers” – because only certain “type of teachers want to go there” – there were the few committed teachers who turned out to be “amazing” because “they care about students” and they recognized the social and cultural capital that the students brought to their education (Milner, 2010; Moore, Henfield and Owens, 2008). Interestingly, in reflecting on the idea that “bad schools get bad teachers,” Kobe made reference to his experience in university with students from the suburban area where Trevor attended school. Kobe surmised that the students who attended school in urban areas did better educationally because they had a “better” system of education. But Trevor, a student who, like Kobe, was a Black male with potential and was receiving the necessary family support, missed out on having similar caring teachers to support him in his academic endeavours.

That the most significant help Trevor received from his coach was a basketball net and the opportunity to make videos to solicit athletic scholarships, suggests that his coach, who was also his teacher, was unable to look past his 6-foot, physically-fit appearance; in other words, a basketball player who would bring him and the school accolades – to see a student with academic potential and promise. It might be said, then, that for Black students, and males in particular, attending an “urban” racially diverse school with committed and aware teachers is likely to lead to better educational experiences compared to attending middle class suburban schools with uninformed and uncommitted teachers. The situation is even more problematic for Black male students like

Trevor whose bodies are persistently read in relation to the reputation or stigma of their former “urban” neighbourhood – in essence, a racialization process in which they are defined as underachievers, troublemakers and athletes (James, 2012) and unable to change. How Kobe and Trevor construct their aspirations and worked to attain them is taken up in the following section.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Kobe recalled that upon entering high school, he expressed interest in becoming a lawyer. He attributed this career goal to his exposure to lawyers and legal education through his mother who “went back to school” to become a legal secretary. He admitted that he did not know what career his mother wished for him, but he understood that while she had the attitude: “do whatever you want to do,” she expected him “to go to school, do your homework, do well” and then go to university. Kobe understood that if he were to fulfill his mother’s expectations, he needed to stay focused on his work, have a career goal, avoid distractions (he did this by isolating himself from his neighbourhood peers), and establish himself as a model student (counter to the stereotype of Black males in the community) who would gain and retain the support of his teachers because they recognized his academic potential.

Many of the Black students, especially males like Kobe, were encouraged by their teachers to become role models for other students, and to this end, were often guided to become teachers and return to work in the community. This expectation to return to work in the community is part of neoliberal thinking of teachers’ approach to working with these Black students. It served to re-inscribe the notion that the social welfare of the community rests on them, and as individuals they were responsible and expected to do something about the conditions in the neighbourhood. One consequence of this expectation is that it could limit young people’s aspirations and their possibilities; but fortunately for Kobe, this was not the case. At no time during any of the three interviews did Kobe say that he was becoming a lawyer so that he could return to work in the community. And he never entertained the idea of becoming a teacher. In fact, in his most recent interview (2011), Kobe declared that he was “careful not to take on the responsibility of a saviour.” So even though during his undergraduate years, he accepted invitations from his former teachers to give presentations to students (in other words, be a role model), he did

so out of a sense of good civic responsibility and not because he was, as he put it, “taking on the mantel of saving lives.”

Having had what might be described as a successful high school experience, Kobe entered university on a scholarship and pursued a four-year degree in business administration. Upon graduation, he worked for one year in marketing, before returning to the same university to pursue his law degree concurrently with a master’s degree in business administration. During his seven years of university, Kobe supplemented his scholarships, with financial assistance from his mother, his student bursary, and his part-time weekend and summer jobs. And he was a recipient of a number of corporate philanthropic support, including a summer job with a marketing firm that turned into the full-time employment for one year after his business degree. The connection to the marketing firm was secured by a service organization dedicated to preparing and placing “underserved youth,” particularly youth of colour, in business or professional organizations and corporations. As resident of an “underserved” or disadvantaged neighbourhood, Kobe was an ideal recruit for the corporate world as a lawyer – the kind of Black male youth who embodied the neoliberal ethos of individualism, hard work, and entrepreneurship (Braedley and Luxton, 2010). Put another way, Kobe was someone whom one might say had a knapsack of disadvantages but through his abilities, skills and efforts (individualism) was able to surmount the disadvantages thereby showing that career ambitions can be realized.

Since he had moved, Trevor was unable to benefit from his residential address as Kobe did, even though like Kobe, Trevor had similar disadvantages and high aspirations. In fact early in his life, Trevor aspired to become a police officer, but given his interest in sports, his friendship with athletic peers, and encouragement from his coach, when time came to apply to university, he thought of entering a program related to sport. He gained entry to Kinesiology at the same university as Kobe. But after one year in that program, he transferred to Sociology because he “was not doing very well in Kine.” At that time Trevor planned to complete his honours degree in Sociology and then apply to the police force. But in his final year of university, he was encouraged by his mother and others to pursue teaching. He applied to education faculties and was accepted a year after graduation. During the in-between year, Trevor worked as a waiter at a restaurant (where he had worked part-time while attending university) so that he “could pay off his student loan.” He graduated with his teaching degree, applied to school boards around Toronto, but

was unsuccessful in getting a job. In the summer following his graduation, Trevor worked as a youth worker in his old neighbourhood and at the restaurant on the weekends.

Unable to obtain a teaching job in Toronto, and encouraged by friends, who had taught in London, England, to do the same, Trevor decided to take a chance and migrated to London in 2009. His decision to go there was made easy as he was also a British citizen since his mother was born there. In many ways, London turned out to be a productive move for Trevor in terms of his personal and professional growth. As he stated: "Teaching in London seemed to be an easier process than teaching in Toronto. There were less hoops to jump through and I found work almost instantly." In fact, after two weeks in London, Trevor found a job at an alternative school "located in a lower socio-economic community" (similar to the one in which he grew up) where he worked for two years. He taught special needs students⁶ with whom he was able to build relationships and helped them, not only in their education, but also with their social and emotional issues. According to Trevor teaching in London "was extremely challenging and difficult, but rewarding at the same time." He explained that the rewards came from seeing students go from "selling drugs, fighting, or just negativity in general...to applying to different colleges, or finding an apprenticeship. The difficulty came from seeing some students sent to prison, a mental hospital, or just give up on their future in general."

Trevor returned to Toronto in summer 2011, hopeful that with his experience and biography he would be able to get a teaching job, especially having heard about the need for Black male teachers to work in Toronto and surrounding area schools. But six months after returning, he was still unemployed despite his many applications to teaching jobs at the four school boards in the Greater Toronto Area. Running out of money⁷, Trevor has had to consider his options which were to apply for jobs as a youth worker or return to his job at the restaurant. But as he suggested, "once you have made a certain amount of money or have been doing a certain type of work, you become accustomed to it. [Hence] I find it extremely difficult to go back to a part-time job or a service job. To me it feels like a step backwards and I am trying to move forward." On this basis, Trevor returned to his earlier career interest which was policing noting that "My uncle

⁶ These were students who were "excluded from mainstream schools due to their behaviour, lack of attendance, or special needs."

⁷ Trevor said that he did manage to save a significant amount of money from working in London, and living with his parents was helping with his financial situation.

was a major influence in me deciding to get into policing when I was younger...I have always looked up to him and thought that joining the police force would be a natural progression." In moving forward, Trevor applied to police forces in the Greater Toronto Area – as he said, "the ones that are hiring." It is interesting that Trevor remained interested in becoming a police officer, given that he grew up with neighbourhood peers who had always accused the police of racial profiling which has contributed to police-youth-community relationship filled with tension and conflict (Chapman-Nyaho, James and Kwan-Lafond, 2012; Ezeonu, 2008). Yet, evidently influenced more by his uncle than his friends, Trevor remained convinced that there are opportunities and possibilities for him as a police officer. In the meantime, while waiting to hear about his application to become a police officer (which he did not get), he worked part-time as a youth worker and afterwards as a full-time city transit driver.

In many ways, Trevor could be said to have the same determination and level of motivation to attain his career goal as Kobe. But unlike Kobe, he has not been fortunate enough (or has not been at the right place at the right time) to receive the necessary institutional help.⁸ Nevertheless, well-schooled in the neoliberal ethos of individualism, personal responsibility, and rules of competition, Trevor continued to pursue his career goal believing that it is up to him to do everything possible to succeed even though his many attempts – the numerous applications and job interviews – have been unproductive to date. In trying to understand his failures, and admitting frustration, Trevor directed his attention to "the process" in which he engaged – with which he had to cope (Luxton, 2010) – rather than the opportunity structures he has been up against. As he said: "Some of my frustrations come with the process and time it takes to find a job/career that you want....Working in England for two years, and having a teaching degree, I believe I have jumped through enough hoops that the process should be somewhat easier." Clearly, the difference between Kobe and Trevor obtaining their respective career goals cannot be attributed only to their individual efforts, abilities and commitment.

⁸ While Kobe might have had the social and educational support of his friends, Trevor did not. In fact, their friendship groups were quite different. Kobe reported that all of his close friends have "at least two degrees." And Trevor, in suggesting that the move from his neighborhood might have been "a good idea," went on to say that a number of the people with whom he grew up and "called friends... have become victims of murder or have had someone in their family murdered, and others... have fallen into life of crime...."

CONCLUSION: BEYOND EDUCATION, BRAINS AND HARD WORK

Apart from their personal efforts and attributes, Kobe's and Trevor's path toward their career goals have been shaped by how effectively they were able to navigate the layered multifaceted structures of inequity which sustain the hegemonic ideology and common-sense rhetoric of neoliberalism, as well as the confounding obstacles. On the one hand, their imagination and acceptance that success in the competitive labour market is dependent on "the rational choices they make and their own skilled and diligent work" (Luxton, 2010, 180) seem to have inspired their consistent efforts and tenacity. But on the other hand, these qualities alone proved insufficient (at least for Trevor) without the support and sponsorship of individuals and institutions.

In effect, Kobe, Trevor and their parents – encouraged by teachers and coaches – dutifully worked with the idea that education is largely (if not singularly) what it takes for them to succeed in society. This would appear to be the case, if Kobe is used as an example of someone whose education and intellectual ability enabled him to become the corporate lawyer he is today working between Toronto and New York City. But his relationship with caring teachers and coaches, and the supports he received from them, as well as from charitable service organizations, cannot be underestimated. Indeed, these resources all played significant roles in helping Kobe to navigate the educational and employment structures and become a role model and example for others to follow. As such, Kobe became evidence that one can escape the conditions in which he grew up. Trevor, on the other hand, was left to find his way on his own with whatever supports his family members were able to provide. Trevor's move to the suburbs for better schooling and education did not occur as his mother expected (Deluca and Rosenblatt, 2010). Ironically, having left his neighbourhood might have contributed to Trevor's loss of educational, social and other opportunities to which Black youth living in "troubled" neighbourhoods might have access. In other words, Trevor might have lost his "at risk" status – a social capital that might have served in building relationships with educators and human service personnel who are interested in 'helping' Black young men with potential to escape their delinquency-producing neighbourhoods.

Neither Kobe⁹ nor Trevor eschewed the significance of education as a means to attain their career goals – neither did they challenge the idea that it was up to them to work hard toward this end. But they

⁹ In all of the interviews I have conducted with Kobe he admitted to being highly influenced by capitalism.

recognized that what they have achieved to date, or what anyone is able to achieve, is not totally of their own making. In fact, when asked what they thought of the notion that a person can become whatever he wants to be, Kobe submitted: "Life is much too unkind for that. You control maybe ten percent; fifty to sixty percent depends on winning the birth lottery. While there is no guarantee, you're well on your way....This is the reality of life. Watch the interview process and see who gets hired." Kobe concluded by saying that for someone like him "the climb is a lot steeper." Similarly, while saying "if someone works hard at what they want to become in life eventually it may come true," Trevor went on to suggest – probably hinting at his coping mechanism:

"What should be said is that even if you work hard and do everything the way you are supposed to do it, your end result may not be exactly what you expected and your end goal may not happen when you expect it to happen. There are other factors that come into play when trying to become someone or entering into a certain career – factors such as location (the area where you have always wanted to work is not hiring for the career you are interested in); [and] competition for the career you're looking into is high. Although you may be the most qualified for the position, I am a firm believer in the idea that it's who you know that really gets you into a career rather than what you know."

The stories of Kobe and Trevor illustrate how individual agency is mediated by social, economic and educational structures. If youth like them are to maintain confidence in the potential and possibilities of education, then educators and others of us working with youth need to help them read, understand, and in turn successfully, navigate and negotiate the societal structures. They need to know how factors outside of their control – many of which cannot be anticipated – affect their life goals. Whereas the rational success formula and seductive reasoning of neoliberalism lays out a seemingly reasonable path to success, the reality is, it is primarily individuals who have access to and are conversant with 'mainstream' social and cultural capital who will ultimately realize their high aspirations through hard work, determination and brains.

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The Abode of Educational Production: An Interview with Peter McLaren

Jordy Cummings

Jordy Cummings¹ (JC): You're from Toronto, and politicized in the era of the New Left, after attending grad school at Massey College and even taking a course with Foucault...Is there anything particular to Toronto's culture that has inspired you, as an educator, an activist and a socialist?

Peter McLaren² (PM): I left Toronto kicking and screaming since I couldn't find a tenure-track university position in Canada, but the renowned American educator Henry Giroux (what irony, he is now a Canadian citizen!) had helped me find a position in Miami University of Ohio, and who could resist that offer? Working with Henry was an education on its own that could never be purchased. Henry has a generosity of spirit that still staggers me. Toronto, ah yes. Well, as far as my perceptions of schooling and society goes, there was *This Magazine is About Schools* that I read in the late sixties and into the seventies, edited by George Martell and Satu Repo. It was housed, as I recall, in Rochdale College, where I frequently hung out with friends. It became *This Magazine* sometime in the seventies, I think. I learned a lot from reading that magazine but I was never a subscriber, but rather an intermittent reader. Which probably accounts for why I didn't have much of a coherent theoretical trajectory when I started to write professionally in 1979. I was never recruited by left organizations, nor did I really attempt to join political groups, even school activists.

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When I published *Cries from the Corridor*, my diary chronicling my experience as an elementary school teacher in the Jane-Finch Corridor, I was basically your missionary liberal educator with a rucksack stuffed with some radical ideas, and the Canadian left as I recall was pretty snobbish, maybe that residue of British colonialism, and I was told that my professors at OISE (where I did my doctorate) resented all the publicity I received from that book. I think, too, that when I left for the US, there was this feeling that I was abandoning Canada. And while I am a dual-citizen and might not be as thoroughly Canadian as Pierre Berton, I consider myself died-in-the wool Canadian. I was always hoping to receive offers to return and teach in Canada but they never came. I would have returned in a heartbeat.

Maybe the biggest political lesson I learned was walking down Yonge Street in Willowdale in 1968 on whatever the hallucinogen of the day was, and flipping off a Metro cop. I was thrown into a black and white and taken to jail, where I was systematically beaten with a flashlight during the night. I still have a raised section of my skull that you can feel – my wife Wang Yan calls it my “dragon forehead.” My subsequent trip to California that year was fraught with similar incidents, and I won’t list those now. But, thanks to the bohemian culture of downtown Yorkville, where I spent years in the coffee houses and hippie lofts, and romantic moments with pre-Raphaelite looking lovers in velvet gowns in the shadows of Philosopher’s Walk on the University of Toronto campus, you could confidently say that prior to leaving Canada, I felt I had imbibed the spirit of the Beat Poets, and consumed as much of underground culture that I could hold in one brainpan without flipping out – poetry, philosophy, Eastern religion, psychedelic drugs, all kinds of new ideas – gestalt theory, rational emotive therapy, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Buffy Saint-Marie, Gregory Bateson, R.D. Laing, general semantics, psychoanalysis, anarchism, acid rock, John C. Lilly, the occult, pyramid energy, theosophy, Darwin, Zen Buddhism, the Bloomsbury group, the Inklings, Dadaism, McLuhan, Gordon Lightfoot, Luke and the Apostles (my guitar teacher was Toronto’s own David Wilcox), Catholic saints, well where should I stop? Stompin’ Tom Connors?

Even throughout the torment and joy of those troubling and troubled years, I watched Hockey Night in Canada with my dad, and reminisced about how we would go curling together in matching sweaters during the four years my family spent in Winnipeg. I really miss those days. That eclecticism no doubt influenced my (thankfully short lived) attraction

to postmodernism in the mid-1980s. I think Toronto is one of the great cities of the world, and I have visited many of them. But perhaps my perceptions of the city are dipped in an all-too saccharine romanticism that from time-to-time plagues me and my thinking.

One thing that I learned from my countercultural days in Toronto was that you make your path by walking and before you can travel the path, you have to become the path. This is the essence of praxis. I had become the path away from Willowdale, away from my home in the Beaches, away from everything I knew in order to step into the void of the United States. But I had yet to find a path towards something, towards an understanding of capitalist society and what would constitute a socialist alternative. My first impression of the United States was of the vastness of the armies of the homeless, haunted by the slow death that stalked the dispossessed in the so-called most progressive democracy in the world, or so the US was described in those days. It would take me years to understand that when the spectre of progress twists his hourglass watch upside down to mark the death-rattle countdown of those millions who are dying on city streets of preventable diseases and who lay unattended in hospital beds crammed into the corridors of decaying urban medical centers, he is present around the world wherever the logic of capital prevails. The pitted and pock-marked lungs of his victims are now unfillable, their life force fading behind curtains of dust and dead memories. These casualties of 'progress' are not restricted to one country. And they are not necessarily living in the streets. They are in office buildings, schools, monasteries, sanctuaries, offices, and shopping malls. They are often our own children, our relatives, our friends, ourselves.

JC: The theme of this issue is "Capitalism in the Classroom". What does it mean, to you to be an anti-capitalist and a Marxist in a pedagogical setting, both in practical and theoretical terms? Relatedly, what kind of shifts have you been seeing, and how can Marxist theory account for these shifts? It seems to me, as an educator, that this is an uneven, dialectical process. On one hand, we see an increase in online courses and a casualization of the academic profession. On the other hand, the range of information available to scholars has increased. As a Marxist, what do you make of all of this, and how does it affect your praxis?

PM: Clearly from where I sit, a spontaneous wave of indignation has swept throughout the United States, an uprush of animosity against intolerable indignities suffered by the working-class, and people of color. The social character of our life-activity, forged by the hammer blows

of value-producing labor and stamped by the impact press of capitalist social relations, rests on the pervasive dependence and dehumanization of workers, the ever-increasing interdependence of capital and labor. The ontological conception of alienation was unpacked magnificently by Marx and that was what first drew me to his work. There is nothing more alienating than schools, which serve as conceptual, emotional, and epistemological prisons for too many students.

The miasmatic system of capitalism in which we are inextricably enmeshed is one whose flexibility, omnipresence and omnivalence of oppression has been as expansive as the air that we breathe. But our labor power is both key to our enslavement and our liberation. Everywhere people are clamoring for justice. We have been stricken to the quick by an outlawry and scoundrelism exercised with prideful efficiency by the ruling class but the problem is not with personal behavior of capitalists, as egregious as that might be, but with the structure of capitalism itself. Youth here in the United States are fed up with war, yet I teach classes where the entire population of students who enrolled in my courses have never not known a time where their country was at war. At this time of endless wars against terror, there are no wistful interludes between wars. Wars today are forever ongoing and we merely suffer between the exasperating diminuendos and crescendos of events.

Now, for instance, the latest crescendo is the push forward by the Islamic State. We are a society that fights symptoms and refuses to treat the root causes of our ongoing crises – of the environment, of terrorism, of resources, of personal security, of education and so on. One of the most entangling of these disconcerting relationships is how capitalism structures, organizes and mediates all of these antagonisms in contextually specific ways. In the current interregnum we are, for all intents and purposes, existing as human capital. We have sold our life-activity to other people and some sections of the population (such as the African American populations who are being replaced as cheap labor by the Latino/as), are relegated to surplus populations that are unable to sell their labor-power. To acknowledge that we live in a capitalist society is to tremble and shudder. Witness today the prodigious and virulent expansion of surveillance technology beyond the exigencies of any agreed-upon notion of decency, technologies that efface the divisions between the real, the hyperreal and the suprarenal and lock us into a scenario much worse than even Orwell envisioned, a scenario where we will become willing agents of capital.

We have sold our labor-power for a wage and we can only use those silver dollars squeezed out of the profit ledger of the capitalist to cover the eyes of our corpse and hope that the ferryman of Hades will convey our soul across the waters of the Styx or Acheron as quickly as possible. We are prone in this society to be critical of primary assumptions and of course to protect them from attack they are solemnly made sacerdotal, and hide behind religious prerogatives. As I have argued for decades, the capitalist marketplace is the new God. I live in Old Town, Orange, in California and the most convenient coffee shop for me is in a Wells Fargo bank. Truly, the building from the inside looks like a cathedral. My friend at UC Santa Barbara, Bill Robinson, notes that the negative of an anti-capitalist movement does not necessarily involve the positive (and here we can clearly see he is echoing Hegel's negation of the negation) of an alternative post-capitalist or socialist project. Which is precisely why, along with my Marxist humanist comrades, I have called long and hard for a philosophy of praxis grounded in absolute negativity. Here, I have been influenced greatly by the work of Hegel and Marx, and Dunayevskaya's theory of state capitalism. I've learned that you can't separate Hegel's dialectical method from this Absolute Idea (the transcendence of the opposition between theory and practice). Just as Hegel advised us to always, ceaselessly, call into question the grounding ideas from which a phenomenon is grasped, we need to break down external as well as internal barriers to liberation through a philosophy of praxis grounded in absolute negativity.

Regrettably, Marx's ideas have been ripped out of their revolutionary soil by decades of toxic bombardment by the corporate media and repotted in greenhouse megastores where, under hydrofarm compact fluorescent fixtures, they can be deracinated, debarked and made safe for university seminars and condominium living alike for highly committed twentysomethings who like to whistle to ballpark tunes in their faux-Victorian bathtubs. For me, Marx provides a dizzying macro-level montage of society filled with autonomous narratives that evoke ineluctable paradoxes that take on new meaning when put all together. In other words, what I find most useful in Marx is his dialectics of internal relations, how all of social life is internally related. To stick with a film metaphor, Marx gives you that tracking shot with voiceover spiked with the ambient noise of workers marching forward...a relentless tracking shot that won't let you escape...and you have to follow it. Once the setting of the drama has been established, you become the protagonist and you are obligated to play the drama out. As we struggle

for the supersession of property and labor determined by need and external utility, we look to Marx for direction in building a new society based on co-operation and production absent the pressures of external determination, where all manner of people interact and collaborate in freely associated, spontaneous and unpredictable ways.

As a teacher, I am interested in how global capitalism is dialectically interwoven with underdevelopment, and how this process is related to the production of knowledge, specifically in school systems and how such school systems teach us how to think, to research, and to develop our methodological skills that often leave us degage and docile. Prior to the ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism, the primary mission of mass schooling was to create the “deep character” of the nation state by legitimizing the superiority of elite culture, trans-coding the culture of the ruling class with the culture of the nation state so that both were essentially seen as ‘natural’ symmetrical reflections of each other. Schools were important mechanisms in the invention of the identity of the modern nation state in the era of industrialization and played an important role in developing the concept of the citizen (a concept always contested by many groups, including conservatives, liberals and radicals).

However, schools today (since the mid-1980s), are discernibly shifting their role from building the nation state and creating democracy-minded citizens to serving the transnational corporations in their endless quest for profits. The nation state, it appears, is losing its ability to control capital by means of controlling the transnational corporations. Corporations have become in many instances more powerful than nation states (although I am not diminishing the role of nation states here). Schools that were once an important political entity that had a public code-setting agenda in creating conventional rules and regulations to be followed by each citizen are fast becoming part of the private sector bent on creating consumers within the capitalist marketplace. As society abandons its outmoded historical garb and takes on new forms, the perpetuity of the existing social order is increasingly called into question. So-called non-political forces – those associated with financial and commodity markets – are now the dominant forces of indoctrination and code setting within our market society and this has greatly impacted education.

Our collaborative existence as consumers has produced a closure on meaning through the very activity of opening up our desire to consume market commodities by means of a default set of blinders created by a capitalist imaginary that provides the formula or criteria of choice. Industrial capitalist schooling was occupied with conventional problem

solving designed to provide students with the rules and conventions to solve particular problems via rule-based reasoning. Knowing the rules of the democratic state was the most important goal and this was often taught by means of a text book-assignment-recitation pattern. With the advent of consumer society and the replacement of Western high culture with transnational corporate culture (which relies on well-trained technical workers), the focus has moved away from conventional thinking to technical thinking. What this ultimately excludes, of course, is critical reflection, or producing knowledge from real-life problems or what Richard Quantz calls “meaningful action.”

Meaningful action does not always take place in situations where relevant knowledge is available or where people are aware what the right choices and actions might be. Meaningful knowledge does require some knowledge of technical reasoning but it requires as well the ability to interpret and critique – to make moral choices and to commit to some action even when relevant knowledge is not available. It requires larger patterns of understanding and reasoning – and it requires us to create and recreate its own foundations and goals as it goes along. Given the abandoning of political institutions such as schools by the state, the focus has been on technical problem solving as a means-ends reasoning that involves selecting from available rules those that will help individuals achieve a particular given end. In short, critical reflection is not a priority. It is in fact, the enemy of today’s education, even as schools tout the value of critical literacy and social justice agendas. Being a Marxist educator means that I see education as a path to socialism. Simply put, my struggle as a teacher is to create protagonist agency to fight three very powerful forces, what I call the ‘triplecides’—genocide, ecocide and epistemicide. I see capitalism as a form of genocide (see the work of Gary Leech) and a number of my students have been developing the field of ecopedagogy (turning traditional forms of environmental education on their heads) –addressing the issues of ecoside, sustainability, ecosocialism and alternative epistemologies found often in first nations cultures.

The moral imperative behind today’s neoliberalism reflects a distinct form of neo-mercantilism. The move in the US economy in the 1970s towards financialization and export production helped to concentrate wealth in the hands of CEOs and hedge-fund managers—and, as Chomsky and others have noted, this led to a concentration of political power, which in turn leads to state policies to increase economic concentration, fiscal policies, deregulation of the economic, and rules of corporate

governance. Neoliberalism as it factors the field of education reflects the logic of possessive individualism, urging all citizens or potential citizens to maximize their advantage on the labor market; and for those who are unable to accomplish this requirement – a requirement, by the way, that functions as a moral imperative – such as undocumented workers, they must as a non-market underclass live in a bottom-tiered netherworld of sweatshop labor that serves those of more fundamental worth to the social order – the more successful capitalist class.

All that is to have worth in neoliberal democracies must be directly linked to the functional needs of capitalism, so that capitalism and the capitalist class can reproduce itself along with capitalist society, and the capitalist worldview that legitimates the entire process. So here we can see neoliberalism linked to legal systems and mechanisms of legitimation that will help secure the market as the only authentically potent form of political and social organization. The state, in other words, becomes synonymous with the market. Certainly global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank comprise the ramparts behind which neoliberal ideology is to be protected at all costs, and it is important to view these institutions as basically controlled by the wealthy western powers, the United States in particular. And it is in this sense that neo-liberal ideology is an imperialist ideology. Anything left outside market forces would be under suspicion of being subversive of civilization – after all, there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism. We could even say that we are living in a neoliberal modernity, in which the capitalist class is gaining power by dispossessing the working-class and selling or renting to the public what was commonly owned.

Neoliberalism is a revolution from above on the part of the transnational capitalist class to give ever more structural advantage to the global capitalist production system. Between this global ruling-class and the working class still exists the shrinking middle class, a fragile buffer between the rich and the poor. According to sociologist Bill Robinson, we inhabit a loosely constituted historic bloc, a social base in which the transnational capitalist class produces the consent of those drawn into this bloc and exercises moral, political and economic leadership – hegemonic leadership in the classical Gramscian sense. My focus as a Marxist is on this emerging transnational hegemony – this new historic bloc based on the hegemony of transnational capital – where, of course, the US is definitely playing a leading role.

While national capital, global capital and regional capitals are still prevalent, the hegemonic fraction of capital on a world scale is now

transnational capital. The purpose of the transnational ruling class is the valorization and accumulation of capital and the defense and advance of the emergent hegemony of a global bourgeoisie and a new global capitalist-historical bloc. This historical bloc is composed of the transnational corporations and financial institutions, the elites that manage the supranational economic planning agencies, major forces in the dominant political parties, media conglomerates, and technocratic elites. Capitalism, which Marx portentously argued was written in letters of blood and fire, continues to be reproduced as robbery, as outlawry. As a Marxist educator, I raise these issues with my colleagues, with my students, but mostly I raise them in the context of arguing that critical pedagogy must not remain solely in the classroom but become part of a transnational social movement.

JC: The sixth edition of your classic *Life in Schools*, one of the few Marxist texts on teacher-education, has just been issued, updated for the Obama era. What were you trying to do with this book, and what kind of impact has it had? In turn, what kind of Obama-era shifts have provoked shifts or tweaks within the book? Finally, have you received any “pushback” or red-baiting around the impact of this book?

PM: The book has had a number of publishers, and the fifth edition was Pearson. Yes, the textbook and assessment company that produces standardized texts, that is singled out by progressive educators as one of the companies that is destroying public education. It owns Penguin Books and the Financial Times and operates in over seventy countries. I mention in the latest edition that after scheduling a meeting with a Pearson editor to discuss the new sixth edition, and after making copious notes and presenting them to her in the lobby of the Mark Twain hotel in San Francisco, she told me that my ideas were “too complex”, that Pearson was too “corporate” and that American students could not really absorb the difficult concepts I present in *Life in Schools*. There was not going to be a sixth edition, I was told. In fact, she told me that Pearson was dropping the book.

I asked her if it was because I critiqued the company in the fifth edition of the book, and she said no, that was not the reason. She tried to soften the blow by offering me twenty free copies of the book. And of course the rights resorted back to me, and within ten minutes I had found another publisher. How was it possible to find another publisher in that short time span? Well, my meeting with Pearson took place during the annual convention of the American Educational Research Association and after the book was dropped by Pearson, my wife, Wang Yan, and I

walked across the street to the lobby of the Hilton. Once inside, I noticed a grey-haired fellow frantically waving to me. It was my old friend Dean Birkenkamp, the head of Paradigm Publishers. He shouted across the room, "Is there any way I can get the rights to your *Life in Schools*?" I was taken aback at my good fortune and of course the deal was sealed within minutes. Yes, the book is updated but the problem is when you do a new edition of the book you have to remove the same amount of the old material as you add in the new material. And I have trouble losing what I feel is very good work. But I made room for Obama.

Obama has hurt education reform immeasurably. Obama has really carried over the George Bush Jr. initiatives and rebranded them with some cosmetic touches. You aren't a good educational leader when your Race to the Top initiatives tie federal funds for states and localities to their use of assessments of national "college and career readiness" standards; when you set yourself on a mission to privatize or quasi-privatize public schools through an expansion of charter schools; when you evaluate teachers by linking an individual teacher's salary and employment status to student test scores; or when you pink slip teachers and principals in schools that have been designated as failing schools; and especially when your entire philosophy of education is driven by the logic of assessment and competition that includes merit pay for teachers, etc. To use federal leverage to get your initiatives in place, to sow distrust of public schools and to give preferential treatment to charter schools (that don't do as well as public schools overall even though they can cherry-pick their students and can refuse to admit students with learning disabilities), to create such a mess that teacher drop-out rates are at an all time high – the voluntary drop out rate for teachers is higher than the failure rate of students as nationally, 16 percent leave after the first year and approximately 45 percent leave within five years – is to give educational reform another kick in the teeth. Whether it's a Democrat or Republican in the White House doesn't seem to matter – the Democratic will wear hobnailed boots to kick out your teeth, the Republicans will use army surplus store boots from the invasion of Iraq to do the job.

I'm surprised that the book is doing so well in classrooms across the US, because of the political climate here. The works of Paulo Freire and Rudy Acuna were banned in Tucson, Arizona's public school system, there is a wave of evangelical fervour percolating throughout the US, particularly with the Tea Party folks, and "socialism" is a hot word. University undergraduates and sometimes graduate students – and their parents – can get riled up if they think they are being encouraged

to criticize the United States. Again, at UCLA, I was labelled “the most dangerous professor at UCLA” during the Bush Jr. administration. Death threats, of course. Hate mail, yes. Not so much now as during the Bush Jr. administration but yes, it is there. There is at least one evangelical book that recently cited me as a grave danger to the young minds of America. And yes I get the usual Commie in the Classroom criticism, and the Cuban American community frequently gets on my case because of my book about Paulo Freire and Che Guevara. But the support I receive is so much stronger, and that is what keeps me going. And good friends. When you come under criticism you quickly learn who are your fair-weather friends, and who are your true friends.

And now I am teaching at Chapman University, a private university located in one of the most conservative and most ‘charming’ cities in the United States, the city of Orange. Well, after 20 years at UCLA I was made an offer by Chapman that I accepted. There is a small community of Freireans whom I very much enjoy working with and who walk their talk. You really do need other like-minded people to work with if you want to survive university life. That’s why I decided to join the faculty here. The College of Education Studies has a progressive Dean, Don Cardinal, who is just about the best leader you could imagine. If you enter Chapman from one side of the campus, you see a statue of Margaret Thatcher, then Ayn Rand, then Milton Friedman, and then Ronald Reagan, so your blood might curdle if you are a leftist. But if you approach Chapman from another route, you will encounter statues of Martin Luther King, Benito Juarez and, yes, Paulo Freire. I have found Chapman to honour diverse viewpoints and to encourage critical thinking. And the faculty here is highly committed to social justice. We also have Dodge College, one of the top film schools in the country. While I teach regularly, I often spend half the week working in America Latina with different organizations, teachers unions, indigenous populations, and more recently the Europeans have been inviting me to participate in discussions about education.

JC: You are very influenced by the work of Paulo Friere and emancipatory education. Can you tell *Alternate Routes* a little bit about how you came to be inspired by Friere and how academics can make use of his work?

PM: I met Paulo Freire through the esteemed educational scholar and public intellectual Henry Giroux and one of his close friends, Donaldo Macedo who is a professor of linguistics. Henry Giroux had helped bring me to Miami University of Ohio, after the controversy

over my book, *Cries from the Corridor*, made it impossible for me to land a full-time professorship in Canada during that time (although I did manage a one-year appointment at Brock University with help from John Novak, a prominent Deweyan educationalist). Henry introduced me to Paulo during a conference in Chicago in 1985 and later, Donaldo Macedo helped to facilitate and solidify our relationship. My formation as a teacher has been forged and tempered in the crucible of Freire's copious and courageous works and my life profoundly shaped and keenly affected by the leadership and teachings of Paulo Freire. Paulo in his formidable generosity of spirit wrote several prefaces to books of mine, invited me to Cuba and Brazil, and while in Brazil hosted me in his university and his home. A mentor and friend over the ensuing years, he modeled the kind of educator I wanted to become. I have been fortunate to have met several world-historical figures who exemplify the best of our revolutionary spirit, and I would consider Hugo Chavez another such individual. Freire, Chavez, Marx – these are figures of inescapable relevance for revolutionary critical pedagogy, all in different ways.

While the legacy of Paulo Freire stands immeasurably beyond us as individuals, his world-historical vision of a just and equitable democratic society nevertheless serves as a quilting-point and guide to the future of education for millions of progressive educators worldwide. Revisiting the legacy and vision of Paulo Freire today chillingly reminds us that the dreams that have been programmed into today's sterile educational instruments of test-taking, accountability, technocratic thinking, and managerial control have led to an abandonment of the search for what it means to live critically, creatively and democratically in the service of those who have been marginalized and excluded in today's immiseration capitalist society. We would do well as educators to read today's 'businessification' and corporatization of education against the liberatory vision of Paulo Freire with the hope that we can and will regain the vision of a critical democracy to which Freire's storied corpus of works points and build the kind of democracy that lives up to its principles and pronouncements. Whether this can be done within a capitalist society is doubtful; in fact, I do not believe it can be done. It has become clear to me in traveling to approximately thirty countries in the course of my educational work, that Paulo Freire is still very much alive in the hearts and minds of all those teachers, administrators, cultural workers, and students who still choose to dream. We need to read the world as well as the world, that is, we need to be able to transcend through absolute negativity those barriers that keep us from realizing our full humanity.

Teachers need to be spokespersons for agency, the embodiment of a critical praxis – I call this protagonistic agency. With wide-eyed awareness, Freire serves notice that not only must we raise questions that the world refuses to raise but is incapable of raising at this historical moment. There is always a quixotic aspect of risk-taking in our attempts to transform the world through critical pedagogy. And we need to remember that critical pedagogy is a necessary but not sufficient for bringing about the socialist revolution. Freire would advise us, his comrades, not to reproduce his work, to import his work as we would some foreign commodity into our classrooms but to re-invent his ideas in the contextual specificity of where we found ourselves in our struggles, and by this he meant, socially, economically, culturally, geopolitically and the like. Critical educators who have been influenced by Freire recognize that history is always open and refuse to postulate history as a determinate truth, relinquishing the subjective in the making of history. There are no iron laws of history, since history works backwards, retrospectively, like Benjamin's Angel of history, caught in the swirling storm from paradise. For critical educators, ends and means must be interdependent. We can't read off from science our moral goals. Even if scientific laws of history obtained they cannot a priori stipulate moral ends because that would make moral ends meaningless.

Freire clearly worked within a dialectical materialist epistemology that attempted to posit a dialectical relationship between the objective world and our subjective understanding and knowledge of that world. Freire was concerned with the 'dialecticity' between consciousness and the world where he views critical consciousness as a type of meta-consciousness or "consciousness as consciousness of consciousness," as what I have come to term, "protagonist agency" or a type of intentionality towards the world that is intent on transforming the world as much as understanding the world. This means seeking ontological and ethical clarity in our relations with the world and with other human beings.

JC: You have an international reputation, having worked with the Bolivarians in Venezuela, the MST in Brazil among many progressive elements in Latin America. What kind of innovation is happening, in particular, within the context of the Bolivarian process? Can any of these innovations be translated into a Canadian or American context?

PM: I'm not an expert on the Bolivarian process. For that kind of expertise, you would need to read the important work of Michael Lebowitz and Marta Harnecker. Recently, Instituto McLaren de Pedagogia Critica y Education Popular helped to sponsor a lecture in Mexico

City where Marta Harnecker appeared as the keynote – the conference is called *Volver a Marx*. We at Instituto McLaren are helping to organize that conference every year and we have been holding it in various cities throughout Mexico. We are trying to interest the general public – workers, students, artists, teachers, managers, farmers, indigenous groups, in the ideas of Marx as a way to initiate transformation and change. I certainly admire the potential of the communal councils of the Bolivarian Revolution, which serve as public pedagogical sites for socialism and endogenous development, and to what Michael Lebowitz calls ‘a vehicle for changing both circumstances and the protagonists themselves’, and deepening the struggle for socialism for the twenty-first century. Such a struggle is founded on revolutionary practice, famously described by Lebowitz as ‘the simultaneous changing of circumstances and self-change’. The new socialist society stresses that the control of production is vested in the producing individuals themselves. Productive relations are social as a result of conscious choice and not after the fact. They are social because, as Lebowitz (2013) perceptively notes, as a people we deliberately choose to produce for people who need what we can produce.

Since more than seventy percent of university students came from the wealthiest quintile of the population, Chávez instituted the Bolivarian University System, in which the students themselves were able to participate in the management of their institution. Education was designed to promote citizen participation and joint responsibility, and to include all citizens in the creation of a new model of production that stressed endogenous development, that is, an economic system that was self-sufficient and diversified. Misiones were created to create a social economy and a diversity of production, and designed to meet the needs of Venezuela’s poor and to counteract Venezuela’s oil dependency. Higher education was de-concentrated from the urban centers in order to assist rural communities. I remember how much I enjoyed teaching at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela, located near the Central University of Venezuela – part of Mission Sucre, which provides free higher education to the poor, regardless of academic qualification, prior education or nationality – housed in the ultra-deluxe offices of former PDVSA oil executives that Chávez had fired for their attempt to bring down the government. College enrolment doubled under Chávez. Student projects were insolubly linked to local community improvement. At a graduation ceremony in the early years of the university, Chávez famously said:

“Capitalism is machista and to a large extent excludes women, that’s why, with the new socialism, girls, you can fly free.”

Chávez set up a structure to offer employment for the graduates of UBV through a presidential commission that enabled new graduates to be placed around the country in development projects. The graduates would receive a scholarship that was slightly above the minimum wage. Some of these projects involved Mision Arbol (Tree Mission), recovering environments damaged by capitalism such as the Guaire River. When I was first invited to Venezuela by the government to help support the Bolivarian revolution, I remember speaking at the Central University of Venezuela. The students who attend this university are mainly the children of the ruling elite. Not many were Chavistas, well, at least not when I spoke there. After I announced to the students present that I was a Chavista (Soy Chavista!), I was told later that some students in retaliation had ripped my portrait off of a mural students had created of critical theorists. Yet I was able to have very good conversations with some of the students there in the years that followed.

Education under Chávez was education for the creation of a “multi-polar” world. For Chávez, education either meant giving life support to capitalism’s profit-orientation in such a way as to bolster the remains of the welfare state, or education meant recreating a socialism for the twenty-first century. Chávez was not concerned with incorporating the oppressed within the liberal-democratic framework, but rather in changing the framework through the reorganization of political space through education, that is, through making the state function in a non-state mode by reorganizing the state from the bottom up through the education and initiatives of the popular majorities. Socialism, Chávez understood, could be sustained only by the subjective investment of those involved in the process.

Under Chávez, Venezuelan education was not only geared to help provide universal access to education (as Venezuela’s poor had been shut out for generations), in particular, to those traditionally disadvantaged and/or excluded groups such as the urban and rural poor, those of African descent, and indigenous communities, but to help prepare the next generation of Venezuelans to enhance the conditions of possibility of a socialist alternative to capitalism. Venezuelan education aspired to be a combination of Freirean-influenced critical and popular education, where horizontal and dialogic (subject-subject) relationships were pursued using holistic, integral and transdisciplinary pedagogies and methodologies based on andragogical principles for a liberating and

emancipatory education. Under Chávez, little attempt was made to distance educational reform from a politicized approach. Education reform clearly directed itself towards an organic form of endogenous socialist development of the social-community context as part of a larger struggle for a participatory-protagonistic democracy. Against the privatization of education and approaches hegemonized by the neoliberal education industry, and its consumerist role grounded in egoism, competition, elitism and alienation, Venezuelan education aspired to be humanistic, democratic, participatory, multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural, pluri-lingual and intercultural.

The development of a critical consciousness among the population was crucial, as was an integration of school, family and community in the decision-making process. Venezuelan education favored a multi-disciplinary approach linking practice and theory, curriculum and pedagogy, with the purpose of creating social, economic and political inclusion within a broader vision of endogenous and sustainable development, and with the larger goal of transforming a culture of economic dependency to a culture of community participation. This approach, for example, underwrote the courses at UBV where mentorship was provided to students who undertook projects in their local communities. Over ninety-three percent of Venezuelans aged fifteen and over can read and write. The Venezuelan government has more than ninety institutions of higher education and remains committed to the idea that every citizen should be able to have a free education. Education was conceived within an integrationist geo-political conception of Latin American countries in a way that enabled Latin Americans to challenge economic dependency fostered on them by the imperialist powers, to resist colonialist globalization projects, and to create spaces where students could critically analyze local problems from a global perspective. Chávez's approach of municipalización refused to isolate universities from the rest of society and geographically de-concentrated the traditional university infrastructure and took the university to where the people are, to municipalities that had traditionally been underserved as well as factories and prisons. Canadians and Americas can learn a lot from these important initiatives.

JC: As of late, you have become a poet. As someone who does cultural analysis, I'm wondering if you can help me develop a Marxian take on the idea of "Poetic Knowledge"? How can we conceive "poetic knowledge" from a materialist standpoint?

PM: I like your question but I haven't produced any systematic analysis of poetic knowledge, although I am certainly drawn to the concept.

As an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, I was influenced by the power of myths, rituals, symbols and this was motivated in part in my study of Old English and Middle English and eventually Elizabethan drama. Later, I incorporated my interest in rituals and symbols into my own ethnographic work, influenced mostly through the comparative symbology of the anthropologist Victor Turner. When I was 19 I met the poet Allen Ginsburg, and spent time with Timothy Leary, and I was very much involved in the Yorkville scene in Toronto. Between San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Toronto, there was a lot going on. I was quite the fan of Andre Breton – and you know, the morning star anarchist rebellion work of Guy Debord and others. The Situationists International influenced me. So did Claire Cahun. My interest continued up through to my reading of Benjamin. Recently I visited the Trotsky museum (for the third time) in Mexico City and was quite captivated of the photos of Trotsky, Diego Rivera and Breton.

Writing for academic journals is painful, and to make it less so, I often use images from my dreams and approach topics in a very unorthodox fashion. Some readers like it, some don't, some think it is pompous for an academic to view his or her work as art, others appreciate it. Scattered throughout my dreams lately have been disturbing dystopian images; I recall one such dream recently where I discover myself squatting atop a Gothic cathedral, whose gargoyles perched below my feet are spouting the blood of history's time-enduring saints to quell the maelstrom of angry crowds below – crowds made up of the powerless, the forgotten, the excluded, victims caught in the crossfire of capitalism (the result of watching too many Zombie or vampire films, no doubt). I peer down at the collarless, blood-covered, and spindle-shanked figures below, shafts of brilliant light slicing through the clouds that hover hesitatingly over the entangled gloom, and then the noxious exhalation and clouds of putrid effluvia wafting upwards from the dank and pungent sewer mist rises to meet the light, and suddenly everyone is playing and celebrating in the city streets, like neighborhood kids who have yanked open a fire hydrant during a heat wave. It is then, in my dream, that a heaven-sweeping yearning to return the planet back to its pristine state wells up in me and I leap into the shadows below. That's about the time I usually wake up. Right after I have been swallowed by the darkness. For me, the challenge becomes thrusting our heads higher than cathedrals, through the confines that limit the imagination, through the boundaries of terminate optimism to a boundless hope so that we can create a world beyond our corrupted self-interest. Without

starting to sound or think like Obama. We all have our dreams and nightmares and while I tend to pain our unmooredness or rudderlessness as dystopian it could easily be described under a different name.

Life does not unfold as some old sheet strewn across a brass bed in the dusky attic of history; our destinies as children, parents, and teachers do not flow unilaterally toward a single vertigo-inducing epiphany, some pyrotechnic explosion of iridescent and refulgent splendor where we lay becalmed, rocking on a silent sea of pure bliss, or where we are held speechless in some wind-washed grove of cedars, in the thrall of an unbridled, unsullied and undiluted love of incandescent intensity. Our lives are not overseen by a handsome God who blithely sits atop a terra cotta pedestal and with guileless simplicity, quiet paternalism and unsmiling earnestness rules over his eager and fumbling brood, ever so often rumpling the curly heads of the rosy-cheeked cherubim and engaging the saints in blissful conversation. Were there such a God, wrapped in the mantle of an otherworldly Platonism and possessing neither moral obliquity nor guilt, who brings forth the world through supernatural volition alone, the world would be nothing but an echo of the divine mind. Hunger could be ended by merely thinking of a full belly and sickness eliminated by a picture of perfect health.

Most of us, Jordy, sling ourselves nervously back and forth across the great Manichean divide of the drab of everyday existence, where, in our elemental contact with the world, our human desires, for better or for worse, tug at us like some glow-in-the-dark hustler in a carnival midway. We go hungry, we suffer, and we live in torment and witness most of the world's population crumpled up in pain. We don't have to witness a final miracle of eschatological significance to reclaim the world. What we do have to accomplish at this very moment is organizing our world to meet the basic needs of humanity. I don't now if there is something poetic in this. If I have developed a poetics of revolution, then it attempts to endow critical pedagogy with a mission of reconciling love and justice. Is love without justice meaningless? Or could love without justice be complicit in the reproduction of deep-seated structural injustices? I approach the Bible as a work of great poetry. I find that I am able to reach students – don't forget that I live in Orange County, behind the Orange Curtain and there is an evangelical church on nearly every street corner – with the message of socialism through biblical references.

Recently I've re-engaged the work of the Jesuit thinker, Jose Porfirio Miranda, who argues with verve and passion that the official teachings

of the church falsify the gospel, since it is clear from reading the texts of the Bible that Jesus maintains an intransigent condemnation of the rich. Even liberation theology gets this wrong when it asserts that there should be a “preferential option for the poor” – it is not an option, but, as Miranda notes, it is an obligation. We cannot shirk from this obligation without imputation of culpability and still remain Christians. There is no abstention from this struggle. The condition of the poor obliges a restitution since such a struggle is injustice writ large. Jesus died for participating in political transgression aimed at liberating Judea from the Romans. According to Miranda, Jesus clearly was a communist, and this can convincingly be seen throughout the New Testament but particularly in passages such as John 12:6, 13:29 and Luke 8:1-3. Jesus went so far as to make the renunciation of property a condition for entering the kingdom of God. When Luke says, “Happy the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20) and adds, “Woe to you the rich, because you have received your comfort” (Luke 6: 24), Luke is repeating Mark 10:25 when Jesus warns that the rich cannot enter the kingdom. The Bible makes clear through Jesus’ own sayings that the kingdom is not the state of being after death; rather, the kingdom is now, here on earth. Essentially Jesus is saying, according to Miranda, that the kingdom is a classless society. There is something revolutionary in this, and something immediately poetic.

While history may be indifferent to the pontifications and bloviations of both church pulpit and lecture hall, there are few places now to turn for poetic inspiration given the commodification of the life world, not even to the receding forests where death mocks us, dancing on the leaves of jimsonweed (you can see it if you focus your imagination).

JC: Any final thoughts on “capitalism in the classroom” in the post-2008 era of lean production and assembly line education? Are there any cracks in the facade that give you hope that a different education is possible in a North American context?

PM: I wrote *Cries from the Corridor* in the mid-1970s and it was published in 1980. It was a descriptive account of Jane-Finch that operated from an unconscious missionary, blaming-the-victim ideology. As I grew in my understanding, I remedied this situation by publishing *Cries from the Corridor* as *Life in Schools* nine years later, three years after *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* was published, which was a analysis of a Canadian Catholic school. *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* received the usual criticism but also many accolades as an example of critical ethnography, such as a glowing review in the *London Times*. But I always

knew that *Life in Schools* would have a larger and more lasting readership, so moving ahead and correcting many mistakes with *Cries from the Corridor* was important to me, and having the opportunity to create a text that is not just about pedagogy but also pedagogical in its format was welcomed. I hope there is another edition down the road, and what that road will bring is forbiddingly unclear. I often urge teachers under the press of modern social competition linked to capitalism not to be deceived by the timeless tenor of capitalist life. But, of course, an overtone of guileful distinction creeps into the comparison of capitalism and socialism, especially here in the USA, where Fox News equates socialism with the National Socialist German Workers' Party commonly known as the Nazis. Try talking about socialism in the corporate media and you won't get far, unless you are on one of the very few progressive programming slots.

Recently I published an article, *Education Agonistes: An Epistle to the Transnational Capitalist Class*, where I drew attention to the development, integration and consolidation of the transnational capitalist class, transnational state capitalism and the emergence of the superclass. These ideas, of course, have been developed by Bill Robinson, Jerry Harris and others. Some theorists think that the BRICS (India, China, Brazil, South Africa, and Russia) offer a counterweight to the G-7 countries. The BRICS are really helping to integrate global capitalism worldwide, although their political strategies vary and are indeed complex and their politics might appear counter-hegemonic at times. So my position is that any counternarratives we want to put forward, any revolutionary practices we wish to engage, must grasp the nature of transnational state capitalism in the current world-historical context. Take a look at the crisis of 2008. It was not created by the policies and whims of some cabal of banksters; rather the crisis was and is structurally rooted in the nature of capital. The crisis is structural. Some rightwing critics agree that the crisis is indeed structural but they think it has to do with public debt. On the contrary, the root of the crisis can be found not only or mainly in the reality of public debt and political corruption – clearly there has been a contagion of frantic recklessness on the part of banksters and hedge fund slime-masters – but in issues of profitability and renewed capital accumulation. As capital consumes a greater share of the social wealth, the only source of profit and value becomes living labor and as long as the share of living labor relative to capital declines due to increases in productivity and technological innovation, there remains a tendency of the rate of profit to decline. And as Peter Hudis and others

have noted, we have seen since the 1970s an acute situation whereby living labor at the point of production has been replaced by new and advanced labor saving devices (and sometimes this pushes us towards exosomatic evolution where we are compelled to give subjective selves away by transforming ourselves into a machine).

What we are seeing as a response to the falling rate of profit is a desperate and slovenly unimaginative attempt by governments to redistribute value from labor to capital by imposing economic austerity that is part and parcel of today's immiseration capitalism. We can't tame capitalism through planned production, or by trying to provoke the ruling class to recognize the clear intimation that their transitory powers are destroying the planet or by trying to resurrect Keynes from his ashes scattered on the Downs at Tilton, in Sussex; rather, we need to theorize how to abolish capitalism through a new kind of labor and human relations that has no use for value production. But we can't abolish capitalism and leave in tact the ideological causes that engendered it, or we will build even more exploitative systems of survival. But the road must lead to socialism or we will have to contend with the consequences of social dissolution on a scale never before imagined, of social convulsion that will shred the planet of all life.

Look what happened in Greece. Bill Robinson reveals how, in the wake of 2008, the transnational state failed to intervene to impose regulations on global finance capital. But it did intervene to impose costs of devalorization on labor. Goldman Sachs advised Greek financial authorities to pour state funds into derivatives to make their national accounts look good. This way they could attract loans and bond purchases. But then, as Robinson points out, Goldman Sachs began participating in "credit default swaps" (speculation on sovereign debt) which is a type of parallel derivative trading where they bet on the possibility that Greece would default. The cost of borrowing for Greece became prohibitive as a result, increasing interest rates dramatically. The whole situation raised the prospect of sovereign debt default while Goldman Sachs made enormous profits. And of course, all of this made it possible for the EU and IMF to offer Greece bridge loans on the basis of accepting massive austerity measures. The bailouts of transnational capital represent, as Robinson notes, a transfer of the devaluation of capital onto labor, onto the working and popular classes. So here we are, teachers, educators, living in the belly of the beast, watch all of this going on. We watch the actions of ALEC, or the American Legislative Exchange Council advancing precisely, this transnational corporate agenda. We see

connections between the state, corporations,, surveillance, militarization of the police. It is all frightening. When we look at the militarization of the police, we see the execution of young black males. As Robinson has noted, African-Americans went from being the super-exploited sector of the working class to being marginalized as employers switched from drawing on black labor to Latino/a immigrant labor as a super-exploited workforce. African-Americans are now structurally marginalized than they have ever been in recent history and they are slated for the school-to-prison pipeline of mass incarceration and police and state terror. Capital has fused with reactionary state power, and the white working-class awaits its salvation from the Tea Party and their ilk.

The road to socialism is made by the path of critical pedagogy. It is achieved by bringing teacher activists together with labor struggles at the point of production, political struggles at the point of reproduction, and political struggles in political society. Kees van der Pijl and Bill Robinson and others, have written more extensively about this. Richard Kahn, Sam Fassbinder, Tina Evans, David Greenwood, Steve Best and others have studied these implications in the context of ecopedagogy and animal rights. We have an enormous challenge before us. The best advice I can give to North Americans who want to improve education is to fight poverty. Study after study has shown that students fare better in societies that are more equal, where the gap between the rich and the poor has been appreciably closed. But even this is not enough. We must create a social universe where the idea of economic inequality is unthinkable. We will not be pulled into the future by a carriage with chestnut-coloured warmbloods with ribbon-braided tails. Likely we will be pushed into the unknown by our own ignorance and by meekly following the coattails of those who purchase our labor-power. Freire urges us to be a subject of history and not a casualty. The stakes are high. They always are.

Learning Without Sages? Reflections on “Flipping” the University Classroom

Joel D. Harden¹

There is a serious crisis in education. Students often do not want to learn and teachers do not want to teach. More than ever before...educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, difference strategies for the sharing of knowledge. We cannot address this crisis if progressive critical thinkers and social critics act as though teaching is not a subject worthy of our regard.

- bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*.

It was a decision whose time had come: in January 2012, I left a well-paid job in the union movement. After seven years, I felt disconnected from labour’s activist base; in general, my work involved meetings with union officials, and overseeing large projects. Those efforts, while useful in some respects, fell short of my own pedagogical expectations. I had learned valuable administrative skills, but wanted more exposure to a classroom setting as well as learning opportunities with students and fellow educators. I wanted to change my situation, so a new set of circumstances could change me.

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But where was I going? My answer at the time was two-fold. On the one hand, I wanted to be more present for our young children; my partner had a very busy job, and I wanted to bolster our existing child care arrangements. On the other hand, I had been writing a manuscript about contemporary social movements (based, in part, on my own doctoral dissertation) and, by 2012, it was time to re-commit myself to that project. From the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street, dissent was making its mark around the world, and I needed to absorb the meaning of this moment in history. Over the course of eight months, as more social movements (e.g.: Idle No More, Chicago's teachers, anti-pipeline movements) shook North American society, I wrote a book (2013) for a broad audience of researchers, students, curious readers, and activists; but a unique place was needed to test the book's merits beyond activist publications or scholarly journals. That led me back to university teaching, with all its opportunities and constraints.

And so, in the Fall of 2013, I re-joined the ranks of the campus precariat. For about \$6,500 per half-semester course, I found work as a sessional instructor in Carleton University's Department of Law and Legal Studies, right around the time my book was released. I facilitated a first year seminar on "Security and Social Movements" (with twenty-two participants), a third year course on "Crime and State in History" (with forty-six participants), and a fourth year seminar on "Environment and Social Justice" (with thirty-five participants). My re-entry into university work would be a teaching-intensive year. These courses were largely based on the Canadian political context, though aspects of them ranged beyond these parameters. I used my book for each of these courses, and also utilized recent movement publications, historical studies, and scholarly research.

By this point, I had also made contact with several impressive colleagues at Carleton, and was excited to be part of a community with like-minded thinkers and doers. The campus was also home to my son's daycare, and many of the movements in which I was active. But as I thought about "how" to re-engage as a university educator, I struggled with several vexing questions. In using my book, was I compelling students to engage with my ideas, and would they be interested in "dissent and the law" from a movement perspective? And how would I learn from what students brought to class, while still addressing my responsibilities in evaluation and mentorship, and the inevitable power dynamics that exist in university classrooms?

This article describes my journey in seeking to answer these questions. It documents my use of critical pedagogy, a term widely used to describe teaching that challenges narrative, instructor-centric models of teaching and learning (Giroux, 2011; McLean, 2006). It also documents the challenges I faced in doing so, and the insights this provided about current debates on “flipping the classroom” (Mazur, 2009; Schell and Lukoff, 2012; Bergmann and Sams, 2012). As I explain, I find much in common with advocates of flipped learning, particularly in their efforts to challenge traditional models of education (an objective that, until recently, had largely remained within the concentric circles of radical academe, or popular educators in social movements). And yet, I also worry that flipped learning, in our age of austerity, could become the latest strategy to infantilize students, placate professorial egos, and justify massive spending in technology-based education at the expense of academic staff. Locating “flipped learning” inside the political goals of critical pedagogy, I think, offers the best means for educators to resist that outcome.

REVISITING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

As I designed my teaching for 2013-2014, I revisited two sources of critical pedagogy. The first of these could be loosely called “radical academe”: scholars who challenge historic forms of exploitation and oppression, while blending the realms of progressive dissent and academic research in doing so. In the North American context, I am thinking of people like Angela Davis, Michael Apple, bell hooks, Howard Zinn, Greg Albo, Sunera Thobani, Henry Giroux, David Graeber, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Epstein or Cornel West.

My second source was “popular education”, a pedagogical approach that has challenged passive models of student learning. For popular educators, students are co-learners with teachers, and not empty vessels awaiting the wisdom of some sage. Students have their own valuable ideas and experience; popular educators understand this, and design learning environments accordingly. Paulo Freire (whose work as an educator began working with illiterate peasants in Brazil, and later inspired millions around the world) was a forerunner of this method, but others soon followed in his footsteps. I had encountered popular education in graduate school, but immersed myself more deeply in this community while working for unions, notably as Education Director for the Canadian Labour Congress. While expert-driven learning had been dominant in unions for decades (Taylor, 2001), most labour educators

I met were inspired by popular education, and sought to apply its philosophy using an array of updated materials (e.g.: Burke et al., 2002; Martin, 1995).

But as I assessed the merits of radical academe and popular education for my own teaching, various strengths and weaknesses were apparent. Radical academe had inspired a generation of social scientists (like me) to question assumptions, and urge students to do likewise. Popular education had fostered a vibrant approach that challenged expert-driven teaching, built confidence in learners, and humility in educators. And yet both approaches, in my experience, were focused on narrow left-wing communities, and reliant on a limited pool of trained hands (or wise sages) to survive. As I refined my own university teaching, I wondered how to transcend these limits. Could I challenge students with radical academe *while using* the pedagogical insights of popular education? Could I utilize critical pedagogy in a way that retained its principles, but reach out to a broader audience?

As I developed answers to these questions, I discovered a recent literature on “flipping the classroom” that had Freire-like themes, and met colleagues at Carleton University who used this pedagogical approach. The flipped class, according to its advocates, was less about students receiving the wisdom of a wise lecturer. It was, instead, about creating learning environments where students could test the merits of course materials in class after parsing through them first at home. Students would receive articles, videos, or recorded lectures by email, or these would be posted to the course website. Educators then used class time to facilitate learning exercises designed to apply the insights of course materials; this could involve completing a written assignment, a quiz, or debates in small groups. This method has been used for classes of varying sizes, from large lecture halls to small seminar rooms. As students engage in this process, professors or teaching-assistants circulate throughout the learning environment, listening to discussion and posing questions to stimulate debate.

Flipped classrooms, as I came to understand them, were more interactive than traditional lectures, and allowed students to influence the direction of their own learning. This approach appealed to my pedagogical instincts, and spoke to my own frustrations in university learning. As a student, I struggled with being “talked at” for extended periods of time, and generally found extra-curricular debates more useful than classroom discussions. In class, it seemed to me, most students were performing for professors or teaching assistants with the hope of earning

high grades, strong reference letters, and related academic success. They rarely engaged their educator critically; but in lively conversation outside of class, many spoke more openly about their opinions. To my colleagues in graduate school, I lamented how this reflected the meritocratic role of universities, and their function in “sorting” our future roles in society. But must thoughtful educators, I asked, affirm this process? Were there not other teaching methods that inspired independent thinking, or intellectual capacities that build engaged, active citizenship?

It was questions like these that led me to Paulo Freire in the mid-1990s. In fact, I remember first reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) in Toronto’s Annex-based Future Bakery, soaking in its countervailing wisdom between gulps of coffee and bites of mashed potatoes. In page after page, Freire named the flaws of what he called “narrative learning”, or the “banking system of education”:

“Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers”, into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely [s/he] fills the receptacles, the better a teacher [s/he] is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are...In the banking system of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, s/he justifies their own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s existence -- but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher.” (53)

Nearly two decades after I read these words, I revisited critiques of narrative learning, only now espoused by advocates of “flipping the classroom”. The most astute of these writers cited Freire as an influence, quoting his remarks that “education is suffering from narrative sickness”, and that “passive education cultivates passive people” (Schell and Lukoff, 2012). But could “flipping” legitimately claim the mantle of popular education, and meet the analytical rigour of radical academe? Was “flipping” truly about building intellectual capacities of student

learners, or prettifying the massive classes that financed university budgets? Were students being challenged as intellectuals, or entertained through nuanced teaching methods? These were the questions I asked while considering the merits of flipped learning, and planning my teaching work for 2013-2014.

MY ADVENTURES IN (AND LESSONS FROM) FLIPPED LEARNING

In 2013-2014, my approach to “flipped” learning involved regular writing, limited lecturing, and creative discussion in both small and large groups. In three Carleton University courses for the 2013-2014 academic year, I asked for weekly written reflections (including a thesis, evidence, antithesis, and synthesis, to a maximum of 500 words), group facilitation, a short paper (1,000 words), a major essay proposal (1,500 words), a major essay (3,000 words), and discussion-based learning in class. This meant an increase in my evaluation workload, but it helped me regularly convey a clear sense of my expectations. For shorter weekly reflections, my comments were more succinct; for longer assignments, I offered more substantive feedback.

No quiz, mid-term, or exams were scheduled, and students were freed from worrying what aspects of our course would show up on tests. Instead, in our initial discussions, they were asked to focus on three things: to be “present” (completing written work, participating in class debates, and actively listening to others); to be “honest” (and convey their actual opinions, not ideas they believed were sanctioned by me or our course materials); and to be “fair” (by taking our class seriously, and accurately depicting perspectives with which they disagreed). Their final grade was based heavily on class participation (40 percent), while the balance was distributed between the assignments named above.

Inspired by various popular educators, I ensured the physical layout of each class was amenable to debate and discussion. This meant avoiding rooms with fixed chairs or row-based seating, where students, in my experience, typically search for anonymity in the back with screened devices. Instead, tables were pushed against the wall, and chairs were arranged in an horseshoe or circle format. Class started with an opening roundtable where everyone provided brief responses to two questions. After that came limited remarks (5-10 minutes) from me, followed by a range of group work (or interactive, popular-education-based exercises), where various multimedia tools were used to engage different learning styles. In one course (“Security

and Social Movements”), students helped choose curriculum readings in the second semester; in this and a second course (“Environment and Social Justice”), students led in facilitating class discussion. They did so after I demonstrated appropriate readings, and interactive facilitation techniques in previous classes.

Inspired by radical academe and social movements, I chose provocative topics for our survey of dissent and Canadian law. Many were introduced for the first time to moments in North American history with which they were rarely familiar: the Red River and North-West Rebellions of 1869-1870 and 1885; the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919; the On To Ottawa Trek (and Regina Riot) of 1935; Quebec’s anti-communist Padlock Law of 1937, and Canada’s related Gouzenko Affair of 1945; the eviction and relocation of black Africville residents by Nova Scotian officials from 1964 to 1967; the longest student occupation in Canadian history of Sir George Williams College (now Concordia University), inspired by black power activism, in 1967; the pro-choice movements of the 1970s and 1980s; the Stonewall Riot of 1969 in New York City, and gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered activism in North America since. Added to these cases were more recent examples: anti-oil-pipeline movements, Palestine human rights campaigns, Occupy Wall Street, Slut Walk, Pussy Riot, and Idle No More.

As I canvassed colleagues on this selection of topics, I generally heard two criticisms. First, that this course material may provoke more than was necessary, and second, that I risked providing scant attention to many cases over considered attention of a few. My experience, in fact, revealed the precise opposite. Students appreciated a larger sweep of history which allowed them to make a more informed choice about the research focus for their major essay. I also found, in general, that controversial topics improved class discussion. The most memorable classes featured tough, passionate debate which generally stayed within the boundaries of respect.

But how, overall, was my pedagogy received? In retrospect, it yielded mixed results. Our learning, as several students explained in course evaluations, was not “what they expected”, but most enjoyed a different perspective on law and society, and the manner in which we engaged course materials. At the same time, many found the writing demands of our work onerous, and a vocal contingent insisted on more lecturing and testing. My teaching evaluation scores, historically well above average, were fixed more in the average range. The decisive factor were a few

frustrated students who provided very low assessments which impacted my overall scores.

There were two moments that embodied this frustration, each of which yielded valuable learning for me as an educator. In the first instance, I was challenged by an infuriated student who received a lower-than-expected grade for his first essay. His essay, in my view, did not demonstrate a critical grasp of our course materials; the text was also loosely cobbled together with little effort at proper editing. And so, as I entered the hallway after class, I was accused by this student of being “biased”, and pigeon-holing him at a “B” level (which, he impressed, he had never been). After listening for some time, I asked the student what he wanted from our conversation. Did he want me to re-grade his assignment? Did he want to withdraw from our class? Or did he just want to communicate his frustration, and leave it there?

After more fulmination, the student indicated a potential interest in me re-grading his work, but he wanted more time to consider his options. Soon after that, I was contacted by our Department’s Undergraduate Coordinator. The student had now changed his grievance towards the entire course, and alleged it was “unfair” to expect weekly writing given this was not explicitly referenced in our course outline. After I demonstrated that this was mentioned in class, the expectations for which were communicated several times by email, the grievance went away (but I learned, after this experience, to list all my expectations in the course outline). Of course, because the quality of this student’s work did not improve, things did not end there.

At one point, I was accused of racism by this student in an email following a meeting he had with our Department Chair (which, I surmised, did not go well). At the Chair’s request, the Head of Carleton’s Student Services then got involved, and this prompted an apology from the student (retracting the racism charge, but re-asserting the belief that our course had unfair expectations). The student later appealed his final grade to the Registrar’s Office, which meant several queries that took valuable time to answer. After this experience, I had a better understanding about why many educators prefer a lecture-and-testing approach; in a context of a massive workload (which is true for most tenured, tenure-track, and sessional professors), why not choose a pedagogy that is less time consuming, and easier to defend when challenged? Writing-and-discussion-based learning requires more effort for both

student and educator, and leaves much open to interpretation should emotions run high.

Another instance of heightened emotion happened the same year, but this time with a much different outcome. In this case, I was approached early in the semester by a student who had shown great promise, but was concerned about her prospects for a decent grade given the demands of her part-time employment. Her “part-time” work day, I learned, consisted of waking up at 4:00am and commuting to the Ottawa Airport. Upon arrival, she booked in travelers as a flight attendant, and staffed the rapid route between Ottawa and Toronto.

And so, when our three-hour seminar was held (at 8:30am on Tuesday mornings), this student had already worked a half-day shift, which didn’t bode well for being “present” in class discussions. But this job, the student insisted, was crucial as a means to finance her undergraduate studies. She was a first time university goer from a racialized family, and faced intense pressure as a consequence. She was also excited about our learning, and very much engaged in debates over human rights. She asked if I could be flexible in assessing her participation grade, given some days it would be impossible to attend class (as her employer required help as a flight attendant after check-in was completed).

After further reflection, and some indication of how many classes would be missed (only three, as it turned out), I agreed to accommodate this request. While some might dispute that choice, my notion of supportive pedagogy does not require identical treatment. I knew I was challenging students, and that some of them faced unique learning challenges and constraints. Some of these had institutional supports on campus, while others proved more difficult to assist. For that reason, early-on in our learning, I urged students to approach me personally (or through an institutional advocate) if they needed an accommodation. A few did, and I took their requests, in general, at face value (particularly if they were made well in advance of deadlines).

So the student-flight-attendant I discuss here, it should be understood, was following up on an existing invitation. In her case, I asked that her weekly written work be submitted by email; I would look to its quality to evaluate her participation grade for classes in which she was absent. This arrangement worked relatively well, until later in the semester when the intensity of employment/education demands (and, I gathered, a consistent lack of sleep) was having its toll. After receiving the grade for her major essay proposal, this student nearly came undone in a tense conversation, and lamented the effort necessitated by a

writing-based course. With further discussion, however, she was able to focus her research, and produce a strong final essay. Despite the challenges she faced, this student scored in the top ten percent of the class.

That, of course, was a good news story, and there were other cases where students produced strong work in spite of various challenges (mental health and employment were common reasons). At the same time, I empathized with students who also struggled because my pedagogy was atypical. University education, after all, is a high stakes enterprise – and this is particularly true for first-time university goers in their respective families (a reality which is quite common at Carleton University). In our increasingly “marketized” society, parents expect a “return” on their investment, and students want grades to meet such expectations. Post-secondary institutions, as many argue, are catering to such sentiments, and designing academic programming based on the “attractiveness of student life”, the “employability of graduates” or “likelihood to attract outside funding” (Cairns and Cairns, 2014; CBC, 2014; Giroux, 2013; Groake and Hamilton, 2014). These pressures make alternative learning methods dangerous, raising any number of legitimate questions about my motives. How could students, accustomed as most are to lecture-and-testing pedagogy, earn high grades in a flipped classroom? Could I be trusted to assess varying points of view (certainly those critical of social movements) fairly? And why place such an emphasis on writing, which is onerous for learners more accustomed to lecture-and-testing classes?

FLIPPING INTO THE FUTURE? (YES, WITH A FEW CAVEATS)

As I struggled with these questions, I gained insight from educators at Carleton who had also used versions of flipped learning. Melanie Adrian, a colleague in the Department of Law and Legal Studies, hosted a lunch seminar discussing her effort to bring “democracy” into the classroom (2014). She described how (in a second-year Human Rights Law course) students were invited to help co-create the course outline, or accept a syllabus that had already been prepared. If the students opted for the former, they were expected to design a process by which decisions could be made, and present their final syllabus to Adrian for comment and approval.

To Adrian’s surprise, students developed their own course outline over the first three classes, utilizing a painstaking, consensus-driven process in doing so. The reading and assignment expectations were

more challenging than what Adrian had designed in her prepared syllabus, and classes brimmed with lively debate from start to finish. At the same time, a committed minority also wanted a return to more lecturing and testing, and hid behind laptops (or other devices) during class discussions. In debates over the course outline, however, these students realized they could not persuade others and opted, instead, to “go along for the ride” (Adrian, 2014). Adrian’s takeaway from the experience was two-fold: first, that most students wanted a new challenge, and would rise to the occasion; and second, that some would resist but not, as it turned out, prevent learning opportunities for others. This, she concluded, validated her belief that it was worth taking risks in pedagogy, and pushing students to demand more from their classroom experience.

Richard Nimijean, another Carleton colleague based in Canadian Studies, recounted a similar experience (2014). In his case, he opted to flip large classes (with over 150 students) by circulating pre-recorded lectures, and using lecture time for small group exercises where students (with the help of Nimijean and teaching assistants) applied the insights of course materials. In doing so, he noticed a few developments. First, that this methodology “drew out” keen learners who used classroom interactions to advance their research interests. Second, that it “woke up” other students who had previously ignored class discussions, and compelled them to either participate or absent themselves (in general, Nimijean found the former more common). And lastly, it frustrated those who preferred the anonymity of a large class, and the reception of knowledge through lectures and note-taking. In general, Nimijean found the last of these trends did not impact the tenor of class, or the outcome of his teaching evaluations. He therefore concluded, like Adrian, that the benefits of flipped learning outweighed its potential negative consequences.

Like these colleagues, I will continue my use of flipped learning, and largely for two reasons. First, because I fear we often infantilize undergraduate learners, and avoid challenging them with work that respects their intellectual potential. Reinforcing this tendency, as Giroux (2014) explains, is our neoliberal age of austerity; as social science departments compete to recruit students (and retain crucial funding), educators are resorting to strategies that simplify learning in unhelpful ways. Multiple choice exams or are preferred over written assignments, extended film segments over lively debate, or “TED Talk” lectures over teaching that develops capacities for engaged citizenship.

These trends, I believe, undermine the potential of social science, and transform learning into a limited, self-congratulatory process, and my experience suggests that students expect better. Many want to be challenged, to be taken seriously as thinkers, and not mollified as consumers of a pleasant experience. In saying this, I do not deny the appeal of flashy styles, thoughtful lecturers, or the possibilities inherent in new communication technologies. My point, instead, is that educators must set their sights much higher. We live in a moment when students, staff, and faculty of our institutions are justifiably frustrated with the status quo. The same is true for most in our society who rarely set foot on campus, and regard postsecondary learning with great suspicion. Mindful educators must enter this context with creativity, humility, and ambition. We must also recall Freire's notion that critical pedagogy is never neutral, but carries an important political vision: it either challenges the status quo, or it facilitates the "integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system..." (1970, 43).

Second, taking another cue from Freire, I also regard teaching as a learning opportunity for educators, and that process is undermined by pedagogy that promotes passive absorption, descriptive analysis, and rote memorization from students. An instructive defense of such pedagogy was made during Adrian's seminar, when a film studies professor remarked, in discussion, that his goal was to actually "disempower students", and avoid the "vain pursuit" of democracy in the classroom. "Too many", he explained, "think they know cinema after lengthy tours on the internet, or visits to film festivals." "My role", he claimed, "is to use twenty years of experience to challenge that attitude, and to educate students in way they could not manage on their own."

Of course, that observation misses the point of flipped learning, and critical pedagogy in general. The goal is not to dismiss an educator's expertise, but to re-imagine teaching in a way that values student experience, the ideas they bring to class, and their own ability to test the merits of course materials. Creating space for interaction facilitates new learning opportunities, and avoids the hubris, in fact, of educators who believe they alone have an answer for every question. Powerful writing, active listening, and vigorous debate assisted my survival of narrative teaching. These skills, as I constantly refined them, helped me grasp ideas, and grow in intellectual terms.

As I did so, there were certainly moments when a "wise sage" was useful, and I owe these mentors a debt of much gratitude. But those moments were far outnumbered by my own efforts to understand, apply,

and assess the value of what I was learning. We must encourage that kind of self-reliance in postsecondary learners, and this requires careful thought and practice from educators. That is what I attempted in 2013-2014, and what I will continue to attempt looking ahead. Where will it lead, you might ask? Only more experience, more breakthroughs and failures, will reveal that for me. For as Friere once said to his colleague Myles Horton, “we make the road by walking” (1990, 76).

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Beyond the First Rung: An Interview with Jim Silver

Jordy Cummings

Jordy Cummings¹ (JC): This issue of *Alternate Routes* has the theme of “Capitalism in the Classroom.” So to begin I’d like to ask you, in the broadest sense, what you see as the effect of capitalism in its various forms in the classroom. Did neoliberalism introduce a different logic? What about post-crisis capitalism?

Jim Silver² (JS): In the last thirty to forty years, the era of neoliberalism, capitalism has done a lot of damage to education. Consider the case of universities. Public funding has been systematically reduced in real terms over a long period. Tuition is rising in real terms, reducing access for many, but especially for those already on the margins of our society. A high and still rising proportion of classes are taught by non-tenured faculty who are part-time, poorly paid and have minimal job security. Universities are increasingly corporatized – management is less collegial and more top-down, and private sector fund-raising has assumed enormous importance, adding to the influence exercised by corporations and wealthy individuals.

An even greater problem lies outside the classroom. One of the strongest correlations in the social sciences is that between income and educational outcomes. The higher the income, the better are educational outcomes; the lower the income, the worse are educational outcomes. Those who grow up in poverty are much less likely to succeed educationally than those who are economically better off. Since a major consequence of the neoliberal era is the growth of poverty and inequality, more and more people are left behind educationally. This is worsened by the

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dramatic changes in the global labour market. Here in Canada there are very good jobs, and very bad jobs, and ever-fewer in between. To get the very good jobs generally requires high educational achievement. So those who are poor are less likely to succeed educationally and thus less likely to get good jobs and more likely either to get poor jobs – those precarious jobs that are poorly paid, part-time, with no benefits, no security and no union – or no jobs at all. Growing numbers are completely detached from the labour market, and have few educational skills. They are the new “surplus” population. Capitalism does not need them. And the children of those marginalized from the labour market and the educational system are themselves less likely to succeed in school, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty that produces poor educational outcomes that lead to poor or no jobs, which then reproduces still more poverty in a vicious downward cycle.

This is a huge problem in western Canada, especially as regards Aboriginal people, who historically have had many negative experiences with education, and who continue to face discrimination in the labour market. Educational outcomes amongst Aboriginal people are, on average, especially low – although when income levels are factored out this is not the case; it is poverty, not Aboriginality that is the issue. This is the case with newcomers as well, especially non-European newcomers, who disproportionately experience poor educational outcomes and poorly-paid jobs. The problems of education, jobs and poverty are increasingly racialized.

Education is not just about jobs. It is about the joy of learning, the sense of self-worth that educational achievements can produce, the creation of a populace that can participate fully in the increasingly difficult decisions that face us as a society. But capitalism’s neoliberal era produces large numbers who are marginalized from the educational system, the labour market and much of civic society. Educational strategies that work well to meet the needs of those, especially adults, who have been marginalized have been developed and have proved effective, but they are non-mainstream approaches that require a commitment – both ideologically and fiscally – to meeting the needs of those least advantaged. Little such commitment exists in the age of austerity. Neoliberal governments choose instead to pour funds into correctional systems and policing. Punishing the poor is an important characteristic of the age of neoliberalism; supporting creative, alternative educational strategies for low-income adults is not.

JC: As a related question, much of the work you do surrounds building community resistance to capitalism in the classroom. You have written about and worked in adult education. Is this kind of empowerment-based approach under threat? In turn, tell me a bit about how it develops community capacities.

JS: I have written elsewhere (Silver 2013) about alternative forms of adult education, especially Aboriginal adult education, being practiced in Winnipeg's inner city. These approaches to adult education work well and produce significant numbers of graduates. A high proportion of these graduates choose to "give back" to the low-income neighbourhoods in which they have grown up, contributing to a home-grown, bottom-up form of community development that is effective. The current NDP government of Manitoba has been supportive of these alternative educational initiatives, far more than Conservative governments would be. Successive NDP governments have not invested enough in these forms of alternative education to make the gains that would be possible, but they have been supportive enough that it is worth keeping them in office given the alternative. In Manitoba now, the provincial Conservative Party is led by a former Reform Party MP who is likely to be as brutal to the inner city, and to alternative and successful forms of education in the inner city, as was the Conservative government of Gary Filmon in the 1990s.

Much of the Aboriginal adult education that has been developed in Winnipeg's inner city, as elsewhere, uses a de-colonizing approach, by which adults are made aware of what colonialism has done and continues to do to them collectively. As a result, they come to see the problems they have experienced in life as being the product not of their personal failings, but of the broad social forces related to colonialism. Coming to that realization is often liberating, and enables Aboriginal people to develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence, to succeed educationally, and then, in so many cases, to give back to their communities. When individuals start to succeed in such educational settings, they bring their cousins, their sisters, their friends into the program, creating a ripple effect by which the benefits of this form of education spread beyond the individual to families, extended families and friends and neighbours. Low-income communities benefit when graduates choose to work in the communities in which they have grown up, making possible a "rebuilding from within" form of community development (Silver, 2011). In this way these adult educational approaches are transformative.

When educational strategies have a de-colonizing character, community development takes a form inspired by traditional Aboriginal values, which are collective and egalitarian. Developing the capacities and capabilities of individuals and of communities is the goal of this form of community development, and it can reasonably be argued that this is foundational for the building of a better world – a world less driven by individualism and competition than by the egalitarian commitment to ensure that no one is excluded or left behind. The transformative character of these alternative educational strategies is, for the most part, politically progressive.

JC: You make the point that literacy is the “first rung on the literacy and education ladder” for working-class people. Beyond the obvious, tell me more about how this builds the condition of possibility for improving the lives of working class Canadians. If you have any particular stories to share, that would be helpful.

JS: Literacy programs can be seen as the “first rung on the ladder” of an educational journey that can change peoples’ lives in positive ways. In Manitoba, 285,000 people have literacy levels that are below the level needed to participate fully in their communities and in the broader society. This is a shocking number. Across Canada, mainstream economists associated with the chartered banks – that is, they are not radicals – have argued recently that low levels of literacy cost the Canadian economy billions of dollars. That’s because people cannot participate in the labour market because of their literacy levels, so there is an “opportunity cost,” and because low levels of literacy correlate with poverty, poor health, poor educational outcomes, and higher rates of incarceration, adding significantly to these costs. Many of those who are illiterate become part of Canada’s growing “surplus” population. They are no longer needed, not even as a reserve army of labour. So the system – at least a system guided by the values of neoliberalism – does not need to invest in them, and has no particular incentive to do so. But literacy programs and other adult education programs, especially community-based programs in low-income neighbourhoods, are relatively inexpensive to mount, and can produce dramatic changes in peoples’ sense of themselves, and in their capacities to be part of building a better world.

In early October 2014, I spoke to people in a public housing project in Winnipeg where I had done a small research project, at the request of a community-based organization, on a literacy program in the housing complex. I reported back to a community gathering on the outcomes of the research, as we typically do in our collaborative and community-based

form of research in Winnipeg's inner city. The highlight of the event was two of the students in the literacy program, Jean and Alice (pseudonyms). They are middle-aged women who previously could not read to their children at bedtime, could not read the newspaper to learn more about the world outside their housing project, and who felt a deep sense of shame as a result. Each of the two spoke at the community gathering to a crowd of 25-30 people, and described their newfound joy at now being able to read. Jean said that she had previously had to rely on her four sons to read anything that had to be read, and now she felt a deep pride in not having to do that, and in being able to read the newspaper and become aware of the wider world around her. She is now volunteering with the kindergarten class in the neighbourhood school. She is a contributing part of the community. Her sense of dignity has grown significantly. Alice said she had not been able to read to her two older sons, and they had not done well in school, but she was now able to read to her youngest son, and he loves school and is doing well. These are, in the grand scheme of things, small gains, but for these women they are huge gains. With improved investment in such literacy and other alternative adult education programs many such gains could be made, but such investments are completely inconsistent with the neoliberal and austerity-driven capitalism of today.

Much of the political Left in Winnipeg is involved in these kinds of grassroots struggles, working closely with those who have been damaged by neoliberalism and by colonialism. This means that we are engaged in day-to-day efforts to make small changes. This may appear to be something other than revolutionary. However, I think it is our collective view that we have to be part of these local struggles, since peoples' needs are so very great. By being part of these struggles, we are connected with a part of the real world that is being seriously damaged by today's capitalism, and we are part of a process by which the capacities and capabilities of those otherwise marginalized by the system are being developed. This is the basis of change that can be positive from a Left point of view. It means that those who are poor can develop the capacities and capabilities to themselves become the agents of the change so desperately needed in their communities.

At the same time, the corporate world is expending considerable effort and money to draw the Aboriginal community into their fold. Business schools offer specialized programs for Aboriginal students; corporations make efforts to hire these graduates. An Aboriginal middle class is gradually emerging. Our collective efforts in the inner city are

aimed not at all at creating an Aboriginal middle class, but at contributing to a process by which those otherwise marginalized from the dominant society can take charge of their lives to build communities characterized by solidarity and lives lived in dignity.

JC: Relatedly, you've written about doing adult education among indigenous communities. What kind of challenges have you faced? What do you see as short, medium and long-term goals for shifting our practices?

JS: Adult education involving Aboriginal people brings its own particular challenges, over and above the key challenge, which is poverty and all the human damage that complex poverty can produce (Silver, 2014). Aboriginal people have had a century of negative experiences with education. Education has produced few if any benefits for the vast majority of Aboriginal people. Many young Aboriginal people see no point in struggling to succeed educationally. They are alienated from the educational system. They are alienated from many systems – the justice system, the corrections system, the child welfare system, for example. Most have experienced racism on an almost daily basis. Many have internalized the false claims of colonialism – the claims of their own and their cultures' inferiority – and this often produces a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence and in some cases even a sense of worthlessness and hopelessness. This, and the constant challenges created by life lived in complex poverty, are the greatest challenge to educational success.

In the program I run – the University of Winnipeg's Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies, located off-campus in the heart of Winnipeg's very low-income North End – we often say that the greatest challenge faced by our students, and especially our many Aboriginal students, is life itself. By that we mean that their immersion in complex poverty and the lasting impact of colonialism weighs them down, and consistently produces multiple barriers to educational success – they lose their apartment because of a bed bug infestation, or their son is in the remand centre and they're worried sick and can't concentrate on their studies, or two people in their extended families have died in the past week and they have to travel to their home communities for funerals, or they were "jumped" on the weekend and lost all their identification, or any number of other problems. Being poor and being Aboriginal makes educational achievement difficult.

On the other hand, however, approaches to Aboriginal adult education have been developed that work well. Many Aboriginal peoples' lives have been changed for the better. More of these gains could be made if

such alternative educational initiatives were expanded, and especially if they were connected with some of the very innovative job creation strategies developed in Winnipeg's inner city. The model that we use can be described as a convergence approach (Loxley, 2010), by which linkages are consciously constructed via local hiring, local purchasing, and investing locally to meet peoples' needs. Alternative educational strategies are central to this approach.

Typically, the educational approaches that work are physically located in low-income neighbourhoods, feature small class sizes, create a warm and friendly and personalized environment, make available extra supports, both academic and personal supports, and design a curriculum that relates to the students' experience and has a de-colonizing character (Silver, 2013; MacKinnon, 2013). Such educational initiatives can work well and adults can make great gains, improving their level of formal education and perhaps even more importantly, improving their sense of themselves and their preparedness to be agents of change. People who make these gains often choose to give back to the low-income communities in which they have grown up and lived. They become the agents of change that are so desperately needed in such communities.

My goal is to be part of a collective effort to expand these kinds of initiatives, and to produce more such agents of change. We are working hard to do this in Winnipeg's inner city. For example, the redevelopment of the old Merchants Hotel – previously a magnet for a wide variety of serious problems in the North End – will have a very significant impact. Merchants Corner will be a large complex over seven city lots that includes thirty units of subsidized housing for students with children, and educational space that is shared between the Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies, which will hold classes during the day, and the North End high school support program, CEDA-Pathways to Education, which is an after-school program and will use the same classrooms from 4:00-8:00 PM. Merchants Corner will become part of what we are calling the "North End Community Campus," which includes other alternative educational initiatives, plus a childcare centre with a strong Aboriginal character that gives first priority to students, and the thirty units of rent-geared-to-income student housing. The North End Community Campus, located in a one-block area on Selkirk Avenue in the North End, is a coherent and strategic approach to education for people who would otherwise be likely to be marginalized in a low-income urban space. Most of the graduates of Urban and Inner-City Studies, many of our current students, and many of the graduates of the other alternative

educational initiatives work in inner-city community development initiatives that are driven by values that are, in many important respects, the values of those of us on the political Left. Merchants Corner will create more people who, having grown up in poverty, become the source and the agents of positive change in their low-income communities. It is a “rebuilding from within” strategy.

Other examples of related Winnipeg inner-city initiatives include, to name but a few, social enterprises like BUILD (Building Urban Industries for Local Development) and MGR (Manitoba Green Retrofit), which hire from marginalized communities and provide training to do useful work – renovating and retrofitting buildings and a range of related tasks, for example. People otherwise marginalized become productive members of society, doing useful work that produces in them a sense of dignity. Most of those working in such jobs experience a process of healing from the damage of racialized poverty and colonialism. Their lives are improved; their families are strengthened; their communities are healthier.

JC: Affordable and accessible housing are intrinsically connected with the education of a democratic polis, and you have written about them extensively. How do you connect the two? It seems to me, using Michael Lebowitz’s idea – out of the early Karl Marx – that this is to foster “rich human beings” or what the labour activist Jane McAlevey calls “the total worker.” She wrote about how workers unite with community members to demand not merely a better collective agreement but better housing. What can we do when so many people are poor and on the streets or shelter system while condos and luxury homes sit empty?

JS: Housing is a central part of the daily realities of Winnipeg’s inner city and of the people who live there. Poor housing is a daily experience. As an important social determinant of health, poor housing contributes to ill health, lowered educational outcomes, difficulties with employment. Decent and affordable housing, by contrast, is foundational – it is the basis for the building of a better life.

The heart of the problem with housing in Canada, and in Winnipeg’s inner city, is that some ninety-five percent of housing in Canada is produced by private, for-profit builders and developers. They build what is profitable, which means single detached dwellings in the suburbs or high-priced condominiums downtown. They do not build low-income rental housing, because low-income people can’t pay enough in rent to make such buildings profitable, and the builders and developers are in the business of making profits. This means that if low-income rental is

to be built, it requires some kind of subsidy, and it is governments that can provide those subsidies. But the federal government abandoned social housing – that is, subsidized housing for low-income people – in 1993 and later that decade off-loaded responsibility for housing to the provinces, which are less fiscally able to produce subsidized housing. The result is a cross-Canada crisis in low-income rental housing. There is a lack of supply; rents are unaffordable; in Winnipeg’s inner city many private rental houses are poorly maintained and over-priced by landlords. The NDP government in Manitoba has been exemplary in producing low-income rental housing and in renovating existing stock, and their efforts have made and continue to make a real difference. But the problem continues, because the backlog is so great and because the federal government, which has the real fiscal capacity, is for the most part not involved in solving the low-income rental housing crisis.

The housing crisis in Winnipeg’s inner city can, however, be seen and is seen as an opportunity, particularly when viewed through the lens of a community economic development model shaped by a convergence philosophy. Deteriorating housing can be renovated and retrofitted; inner-city residents otherwise disengaged from the labour market can be trained and employed to do this work; social enterprises can be created to organize such activity and to supply materials for the purpose. The result of using this approach in Winnipeg’s inner city has been increased employment of those typically seen as hard to employ, improved housing quality, reduced heating and water bills for low-income people, strengthened families and healthier communities.

The production of low-income rental housing and the financial support of those organizations engaged in a convergence approach to housing and other inner-city issues is a good example of why so many of us in Winnipeg continue to support the provincial NDP government, despite its limitations. Subsidies are essential if low-income rental housing is to be built, and governments have to provide those subsidies. To produce low-income rental housing in the volumes that are needed is very costly; only governments can do it. The provincial NDP government is doing it, despite its fiscal limitations, while also supporting many of the community-based organizations that do excellent community development work in Winnipeg’s inner city.

JC: In your work with the working classes of Winnipeg, do you see a difference, in terms of levels of consciousness of their class interests, between Winnipeggers and people from other parts of Canada? Tell me about the differences and commonalities you see.

JS: Many of those we work with in Winnipeg's inner city are not part of the working class. They are part of capitalism's surplus population. They experience "complex poverty" or "spatially concentrated racialized poverty" (Silver, 2014; 2010). They are either completely detached from the labour market – in many cases inter-generationally – which is a key factor in street gang activity (Comack et al., 2013) and in children's involvement in survival sex, for example, or they have low-level jobs –cleaning motels or seniors' residences, for example. Few appear to be active in retail-level service sector jobs, probably a function of racism, given that so many entry-level service sector jobs require direct interaction with the public. Our work in the inner city produces jobs, and growing numbers are employed in such jobs, although most of the community-based organizations in which they are employed are dependent upon government for all or most of their funding, and so this employment is precarious in its own way – subject to changes in governments.

Winnipeg and other western Canadian cities are distinctive in Canada because of large and still rapidly growing Aboriginal populations, a significant proportion of whom are struggling with complex poverty and the damage caused by colonialism. Many still suffer from the inter-generational effects of the residential schools and colonialism more generally, and an astonishing proportion of them have at some point in their lives been institutionalized. In fact, in Comack et al. (2013) we use the term "trauma trails" to describe, among other things, the long and largely uninterrupted trail of institutions in which Aboriginal people have been incarcerated – residential schools, youth detention centres, the "sixties scoop" (by which many thousands of Aboriginal children were seized from their homes and sent away from their parents, often to other cities and even the USA), Child and Family Services (10,000 children, over eighty-five percent of them Aboriginal, are now in the care of CFS in Manitoba, in foster homes or group homes), and provincial and federal penal institutions, which in western Canada are wildly disproportionately populated by young Aboriginal men and, increasingly, women. Relatively few are the Aboriginal families that have not been touched by this institutionalization, and this adds to and reproduces the complex poverty and related trauma that are such a central part of so many Aboriginal peoples' life experience. The results are many – street gang activity as a form of resistance, low levels of formal educational attainment, poor health (diabetes, for example, is an epidemic), the constant struggle with racism, the connection of racism and poverty to

the tragedies of missing and murdered Indigenous women, low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence as the result of the internalization of colonialism.

Our efforts in Winnipeg's inner-city involve our working with people there, as allies, finding ways to create educational approaches that are relevant and that will produce collective benefits, and finding ways to create employment in which inner-city people feel comfortable and can earn a living, and finding ways to support families in building healthier futures for their children. In this work, we spend a great deal of time listening and learning. Many inner-city people themselves, and particularly inner-city Aboriginal people, have a deep understanding of the character of the problems they face, and of the kinds of solutions that will work. We learn from them and work alongside them. The result is that many of us who come from progressive political backgrounds have become relevant to the lives of those who are poor. We are not disengaged from, but rather are deeply involved with, the complexities and challenges of real-life, day-to-day struggles and the search for real solutions.

JC: The late French socialist theorist Andre Gorz coined the very useful concept of "non-reformist reforms." These are reforms that don't fundamentally overthrow the system as a whole, but nevertheless are reforms that actually decommodify aspects of our daily lives, and can help develop our capacities to build a better world and engage in transformative politics. On the other hand, this is counterpoised to "reformist reforms," in other words, reforms that may indeed provide immediate help to people in need, but actually serve to reinforce the status quo and disempower popular activity from below. How do you see the work you do as fitting in this continuum? It seems to me much of what you do is the former, that is to say, "non-reformist."

JS: The question of "reformist" versus "non-reformist reforms" is an interesting one in the case of those of us working in Winnipeg's inner city. One interpretation might reasonably be that we are engaged only in "reformist reforms" – those that provide immediate help to inner-city people and that don't challenge the status quo. It could well be argued that what we do here simply keeps the bottom from falling out of the inner city, as it has done for example in Detroit. Many of the community-based organizations with which we work closely are involved in healing those damaged so greatly by colonialism and racialized poverty. It is responding to immediate and terrible problems.

I think, however, that the case can be made that overall, our work is, at least potentially, much more than that. The alternative forms of education, especially adult education, that have been developed here in Winnipeg's inner city, and the innovative job creation strategies, really do develop the capacities and capabilities of people, and enable them to play an active and productive role in the communities in which they live. Much of the work of community-based Aboriginal organizations is aimed at healing at a pre-formal educational level, and can appear to be a classic case of "reformist reforms," but Shauna MacKinnon has been able to show in her work (MacKinnon and Stephens, 2008) that these organizations enable people to take small but exceptionally important steps in developing their agency. I have argued (Silver, 2006, Chapter 5) that Aboriginal forms of community development, rooted in the traditional Aboriginal values of sharing and community, can lead from personal healing to individual agency to collective engagement, thus leading to stronger and healthier families and communities. Some young Aboriginal people are beginning to organize in ways that are exceptionally creative and attractive. Their aim is not to overthrow the system, but rather to create a space in which they can live in a dignified and decolonized fashion, as Aboriginal people, while emphatically *not* being a part of the crazed competitiveness and greed of the capitalist system. Their approach to change is emerging from their experience of racialized poverty, and of colonization, and is rooted in the Aboriginal cultural re-awakening that is part of what is happening in Winnipeg's inner city, and which is built in large part upon traditional Aboriginal values, which are non-capitalist values. I would argue that these can legitimately be seen as non-reformist reforms.

These reforms, it is true, are not aimed at overthrowing the system and creating in its place a socialist society. They are aimed at enabling the very poor – and in western Canadian cities especially, Aboriginal people – to build alternative ways of being within a cruel capitalist system. These are ways of being that are rooted in such concepts as sharing and community. As we head toward ever-greater global economic crisis and ever-more climate disasters, these ways of being will increasingly be seen as attractive, and in that sense may well be "non-reformist reforms."

JC: Keeping the previous point in mind, you have also written that Manitoba's New Democratic Party must return to its social democratic roots. You point out the past achievements of social democracy which are not inconsiderable in central Canada. You offer a compelling alternative vision of provincial social democracy. With that said, how would

you respond to the charges that with the combination of low-levels of struggle from below, and the mechanics of capitalism right now, that this type of social democracy is impossible. What kind of agency would make it possible in Manitoba or in any other province?

JS: In the work that we are trying to do in Winnipeg's inner city, governments play a large role, for better or worse. Manitoba's NDP government plays a positive role. They do not do enough, and we work hard to push them to do more. But the difference between their approach and that of Manitoba's Conservative Party is so great that we believe it is essential to offer critical support to the government. The needs of those who are poor are so great that it would be difficult to justify our *not* being a part of these struggles. As a result, many of us who are on the political Left and outside the government are actively engaged in the inner city, doing what we can as allies to promote positive reforms. In that work we have been, by and large, supported by the NDP government, and in return we offer the government support, and constantly push them to do more.

NDP governments could do more, much more. This is possible. There is enormous wealth in Canada, but over the past thirty to forty years most of the gains in our collective wealth have been appropriated by the wealthy. They ought to be taxed, and those tax revenues ought to be put to work to solve the kinds of problems being discussed here, and to build an environmentally sustainable future. Doing so would produce enormous societal benefits. More people educated and employed – it is possible to create many jobs, because there are so many needs to be met – would increase tax revenues, and reduce government expenditures on health and corrections and social assistance, for example (Silver, 2014, Chapters 5 and 6). Done in an aggressive and systematic and long-term fashion, with governments taking advantage of their capacity to educate the public and win broad-based support for such an approach, this is possible. It may or may not happen, but it is possible.

By abandoning the realm of electoral politics and the real-world struggles of those most damaged by neoliberal capitalism and the politics of austerity, the broad Left has created a great empty space into which a mean-spirited political Right has marched, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. These narrow-minded right-wing ideologues do not have the support of the majority of Canadians, but that majority has difficulty seeing any viable alternative. That alternative, I believe, is best built by active engagement in struggles, including electoral struggles.

JC: It's a difficult struggle right now for those of us in academia, social movements and policy circles with truly progressive politics. What gives you hope in these dark times?

JS: I'm not quite sure that my attitude could be described as hopeful. These are, in many important respects, dark times. Personally, I enjoy the challenge of being actively engaged in low-income communities, contributing whatever skills I might have to progressive struggles, and learning something new and interesting every day. How much potential this kind of work has to stave off future disasters, I don't know. But there is in my opinion no real alternative to involvement in the struggle at a grassroots level, and to thinking and talking and writing about the character of that involvement and what it may mean for building a better world. I appreciate Gramsci's slogan, "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will," and think of that phrase on those days when the going is especially tough. Many days are like that, but we win the occasional battle, and one of the important things learned by those of us involved in the great social justice organization of the 1990s here in Winnipeg – Cho!ces – was the importance of celebrating victories, no matter how small. To celebrate victories, you have to be involved in struggles.

Being involved in struggles – in the case of many of us in Winnipeg's inner city, struggles alongside those who are particularly poor and marginalized and racialized and colonized – implies a belief in the importance of human agency. Marxism has made enormous contributions to our understanding of the dynamic structures of capitalism, but perhaps in doing so has under-estimated the importance of human agency in the process of change. I think that the work we are doing in Winnipeg's inner city is especially focused on the importance of human agency in the process of change. In working alongside those in the inner city our objective is to produce, from within the ranks of the poor, and in many cases the racialized and colonized poor, the human agents of a form of change in which the poor themselves become the means by which their poverty is overcome – in ways and toward ends that they themselves determine. The alternative forms of education and related initiatives that many of us are involved with in Winnipeg's inner city are an important part of this process.

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Critical Education and Insurgent Pedagogies: An Interview with E. Wayne Ross

Carlo Fanelli

Carlo Fanelli¹ (CF): Before working in the post-secondary education sector, you also taught as a pre-school and high-school instructor. Could you explain the impact that neoliberalism has had philosophically and as a political economic project on the institutional aspects of education. Have there been noticeable cultural shifts, differences in pedagogical emphases or allocation of funding priorities?

E. Wayne Ross² (EWR): For more than three decades now there has been a steady intensification of education reforms worldwide aimed at making public schools and universities more responsive to the interests of capital than ever before. And, neoliberal ideology is at the heart of what's been labelled the global education reform movement or GERM. Key neoliberal principles such as reducing government spending for education (and other social services) and privatizing public enterprises has led to targeting the very existence of public education or more precisely education in the public interest. Indeed, a key aim of neoliberalism is the destruction of the commons, the very idea of the common

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good, instead substituting individualism and individual responsibility. This idea is reflected in Stephen Harper's calls to avoid "committing sociology" or Margaret Thatcher's declaration that there is "no such thing as society." Denying the existence of the commons and public interests transforms long held notions about what democracy is and the role of public education in democratic societies.

Neoliberal education reform aims for a large-scale transformation of public education that opens it up to private investment, enabling extraction of private profits. In 2005, the global education market was valued at \$2.5 trillion; and the latest estimates are \$4.4 trillion, with projections for rapid growth over the next five years. So, the opportunity for profit extraction is huge. Corporations and the governments that serve their interests, along with neoliberal think tanks like the Fraser Institute and Frontier Centre and philanthrocapitalist entities like the Gates, Broad, and Walton Foundations have been systematically reconstructing the discourse about public education as well as education funding and the nature of teaching and learning that goes in classrooms so that public education better serves the interests of capital. As a result, education aimed at helping students develop personally meaningful understandings of the world and contributing to a flourishing civil society is stifled.

There are three key strategies of neoliberal education reform: (1) School choice and privatization; (2) human capital policies for teachers; and (3) standardized curriculum coupled with the increased use of standardized testing. Charter schools are publicly funded independent schools that are attended by choice. Neoliberal education reformers promote policies that would close public schools deemed "low performing" and replace them with publicly funded, but privately run charters and/or expanded use of vouchers and tax credit subsidies for private school tuition. Human capital policies for teachers aim to alter the working conditions of teachers, which makes eliminating or limiting the power of teacher unions a primary objective of neoliberal education reform. Human capital education policies include increasing class size (often tied to firing teaching staff); eliminating or weakening of tenure and seniority rights; using unqualified or "alternatively certified" teachers; increasing the hours that teachers work and reducing sick leave; and replacing governance by locally elected school boards, with various forms of mayoral and state takeover or private management; and using the results of student standardized tests to make teacher personnel decisions in hiring, firing, and pay.

Key parts of the education reform discourse in the USA, which can be traced directly through every Republican and Democratic presidential administration from Reagan to Obama, include a focus on standardization of the curriculum and de-professionalization of teachers as teaching is increasingly reduced to test preparation. From Reagan's *A National At Risk*, to George H. W. Bush's National Education Summits, Clinton's Goals 2000, to George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, and Obama's *Race To the Top*, there has been an ever tightening grip on what students learn and what teachers teach. The primary instruments used in the surveillance of teachers and students and enforcement of official knowledge has been the creation of state level curriculum standards paired with standardized tests, creating bureaucratic accountability systems that undermine the freedom to teach and learn.

In parallel to the rise of standards-based, test-driven education there is been an ever growing resistance at the grassroots levels in the USA. What started has a small movement in the education community in the 1990s – led by groups such as the Rouge Forum, Chicago public schools teachers and other educators who produce the newspaper *Substance*, including teacher and writer Susan Ohanian, The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) and the Rethinking Schools collective – has blossomed into a wide-spread resistance movement.³ For example, teachers in Chicago and Seattle have recently won important victories for the resistance to corporate education reforms.

While community-based groups across the USA continue to gain traction in efforts to derail test-driven education, the education de-formers led by Obama's education secretary Arne Duncan and corporate/philanthropic backers including the Gates, Broad and Walton Family foundations still have the upper hand, demanding use of student standardized tests results to make teacher personnel decisions in hiring, firing, and pay. And, the next big thing in standardized curriculum is known as the Common Core State Standards, which were created by Gates Foundation consultants for the National Governors Association. The Common Core is, in effect, a national curriculum that will be enforced via tests that are currently being developed by publishing behemoth Pearson.

The political and educational landscape in Canada differs in important ways from the USA, but it is certainly not immune from the deleterious effects of neoliberal education reform. The Canadian education

³ See, for example: FairTest's "Testing and Resistance Reform News" (<http://fairtest.org/news/other/>); Substance News (<http://www.substancenews.net/>); Susan Ohanian's website (<http://www.susanohanian.org/>); Rethinking Schools (<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/>); and The Rouge Forum website (<http://www.rougeforum.org/>).

system is a collection of regional systems in which governments have advanced neoliberal agendas for public education, including “increasing choice” by fostering private schools, introducing a number of market mechanisms into the public education, imposing standardized tests that used to create ranking or “league tables” to enhance competition between schools as well as allowing private companies to advertise in schools.

The province of British Columbia, in particular, is an important battleground over neoliberal education reform. BC is home to one of the most politically successful neoliberal governments in the world and schoolteachers have been waging a pitched battle against the BC Liberals since the party swept into power in 2001. I’ll say more on that later. School governance in the province is also entirely top-down, with the appearance of local influence via local school planning councils. While BC does not have the proliferation of standardized tests that exist in the USA, standardized tests scores are used by the Fraser Institute, an influential neoliberal think tank, to rank schools in BC. Fraser Institute rankings are used to promote the notion “choice” in education and generally serve as a means for categorizing poorer, more diverse public schools as “failing,” while wealthy private schools dominate the top spots.

In BC, government retains its authority over public education, but no longer undertakes the responsibility of assuring the educational well-being of the public. Instead, this responsibility is devolved to individual school boards. The funding model for public education in BC, which I’ll mention again in a moment, reflects the neoliberal principle that more of the public’s collective wealth should be devoted to maximizing private profits rather than serving public needs. Canada, like the USA, has also seen a dramatic pushback against neoliberal education reform. Perhaps the most widely known recent action was the 2012 Quebec student protests, also known as the Maple Spring, in response to government efforts to raise university tuition. Significant examples of resistance to the common-nonsense of neoliberalism in the past decade are the British Columbia teachers’ 2005 and 2014 strikes, which united student, parent, and educator interests in resisting the neoliberal onslaught on education in the public interest.

The first step in resisting neoliberalism is realizing that we are not “all in this together,” that is, neoliberalism benefits the few at the expense of the many. The corporate mass media would have us adopt the mantra that what is good for the corporate capitalist class is good for the rest of us, thus we have the logic of efficiency, cost containment

and (deceptive claims about) affordability in education prized over the educational well-being of the public.

The central narrative about education (and other social goods) has been framed in ways that serve the interests of capital. For example, in North America, free market neoliberals in think tanks and foundations and in the dominant media outlets have been successful in framing discussions on education in terms of accountability, efficiency, market competition, and affordability. The assumptions underlying these narratives are typically unquestioned or at least under-analyzed. Indeed, neoliberal education reforms are not only flawed in their assumptions, but also even when judged on their own terms these reforms are empirical failures and have worsened the most pressing problems of public education, including funding inequalities, racial segregation, and anti-intellectualism. It is imperative that educators challenge the dominant neoliberal frames that would define education as just another commodity from which profits are to be extracted.

CF: You are currently involved in the Rouge Forum and the Institute for Critical Education Studies, which also happens to publish the academic journals *Critical Education* and *Workplace*. Could you explain what initiatives the Rouge Forum is involved in? In what ways does the Institute for Critical Education Studies and its companion journals support critical social research, intellectual freedom and democratic political engagement?

EWR: The origins of the Rouge Forum can be traced back to anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-chauvinist actions carried out by social studies, literacy, and special educators in the mid-1990s. The Rouge Forum emerged from a series of political controversies within the National Council for the Social Studies (the largest professional organization for social studies teachers and teacher educators in North America) during the 1990s. Specifically, two events at the 1994 annual meeting of NCSS in Phoenix galvanized a small group of activists who later founded the Rouge Forum. First, a staff person from the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (who was also a certified social studies teacher) was arrested for anti-ROTC leafleting at a NCSS conference event; and secondly, the governing body of NCSS rejected a resolution condemning California's Proposition 187 (which established a state-run citizenship screening system and prohibited undocumented US persons from using health care, public education, and other social services) and calling for a boycott of the state as a site for future meetings of the NCSS. These events fuelled a level of political activism the NCSS

had rarely experienced and emphasized the need for organized action in support of free speech and anti-racist pedagogy in the field of social studies education in general and within NCSS in particular

In 1998, Rich Gibson, Michael Peterson (both then on the faculty at Wayne State University), and myself organized what became the first meeting of the Rouge Forum in Detroit. The meeting of around 300 education activists was described by one participant as a “72 hour conversation without end.” People came and went and the agenda flowed with the ideas of attendees. Most found it a refreshing change from the routine of reading papers to each other. One important advantage was having access to a venue that was open 24 hours a day, offering a large room for plenaries and small breakout rooms at no cost; testimony to the working class roots of Wayne State University.

Toward the close of the meeting, we chose the name, Rouge Forum, after the nearby Ford River Rouge Complex, and all of its implications, and our dedication to open investigations of the world. We have never been troubled with the relationship to the French, “red,” but that was not on the minds of the locals to whom The Rouge means a river, and a huge factory in death throes, and the possibility to overcome. Since, we have been accused of being nothing but reds (hardly true, liberal democrats, libertarians, US troops, socialists, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, and many others belong to the Rouge Forum.) We’ve stuck with the name since and the reds inside the Rouge Forum seem comfortable with the action-oriented liberals, and vice versa. Friendship, sacrifice for the common good (solidarity), all remain ethics of the Rouge Forum.

The Rouge Forum is perhaps the only school-based group in North America that has connected imperialism, war, and the regulation of schooling. The Rouge Forum has been active in efforts to resist curriculum standardization and high-stakes testing in schools, particularly as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act and Obama’s Race To The Top scheme in the USA. The Rouge Forum produced the first petition against high-stakes testing in schools in the USA and has been a key player in the testing resistance movement from its beginning, working strategically with groups like FairTest (The National Center for Fair and Open Testing) and locally organized groups in Michigan, New York, Illinois and many other states in a variety of campaigns, protests, and direct actions.

Rouge Forum members have also joined, and assumed leadership in, community coalitions organized against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, usually coalitions involving labour, leftists, grassroots collectives,

and religious groups aimed at ending the war, and they are frequently involved in school-based organizing, and counter-military recruitment as well. The Rouge Forum holds an annual, theme-based, meeting and members also participate within various professional organizations and union conferences as well organizing local events. The 2015 meeting is in the planning stages and will be San Diego State University (Rouge-Forum.org and RougeForumConference.org).

The operative principle for the actions of the Rouge Forum is the idea that schools hold a key position in North American society and educators play a critical role in the creation of a more democratic egalitarian society, or one that increases inequality and authoritarianism. At issue for the Rouge Forum, as Rich Gibson and I wrote in a 2007 *CounterPunch* article, “school workers do not need to be missionaries for capitalism, and schools its missions...” The metaphor is nearly perfect.

Schools hold centripetal and centrifugal positions in North American society. One in four people are directly connected to schools: school workers, students, or parents. Many others are linked in indirect ways. Schools are the pivotal organizing point for most people’s lives, in part, because of de-industrialization and, in part, the absence of serious struggle emanating from the industrial working class despite its historical civilizing influence.

School is not merely school, but the point of origin for health care, food, and daytime shelter and safety for many people. Schools are also huge markets (consider the bus purchases, architectural and building costs, salaries), as well as bases for technological instruction and skill training. Schools warehouse children, serving as an important tax supported day care system for companies whose increasingly poorly paid workers come from dual income family who see their children an average of 20 hours less a week than they did in 1979. The beginning point in understanding the role teachers play as major actors in a centripetally positioned organization is to understand the value teachers create within capitalist societies. This is what Marx had to say:

“The only worker who is productive is one who produces surplus value for the capitalist, or in other words contributes to the self-valorization of capital. If we may take an example from outside the sphere of material production, a schoolmaster is a productive worker when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his pupils, he works himself into the ground to enrich the owner of the school. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sau-

sage factory, makes no difference to the relation. The concept of a productive worker therefore implies, not merely a relation between the activity of work and its useful effect, between the worker and the product of the work, but also a specific social relation of production, a relation with a means of valorization. To be a productive worker is therefore not a piece of luck, but a misfortune.” (Marx, 1976, 644)

The Institute for Critical Education Studies is a relatively new entity, which I co-founded with two of my colleagues in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Sandra Mathison and Stephen Petrina. As Paul Simon sings “that’s astute...why don’t we get together and call ourselves an institute.” On the lighter side, that’s what we’ve done. We had been informally networked since 2004. The Institute for Critical Education Studies was formally established in October 2010 to support studies within a critical education or critical pedagogy tradition. ICES maintains a network that conducts and circulates cultural, educational, or social research and discourse that are critical in method, scope, tone, and content.

ICES, *Critical Education* and *Workplace: A Journal For Academic Labor* defend the freedom, without restriction or censorship, to disseminate and publish reports of research, teaching, and service, and to express critical opinions about institutions or systems and their management. Co-Directors of ICES, co-Hosts of ICES and *Workplace* blogs, and co-Editors of these journals resist all efforts to limit the exercise of academic freedom and intellectual freedom, recognizing the right of criticism by authors or contributors.

ICES, *Critical Education*, and *Workplace* all function with an independent and free press ethic, as a publisher and as media for its academic and citizen journalists. *Critical Education* and *Workplace* publish academic research along with a range of critical opinion while the ICES and *Workplace* blogs, Twitter stream, and Facebook walls support academic and citizen journalism. The co-Directors of ICES function in various capacities as editors, researchers, teachers, cultural critics or intellectuals, and academic and citizen journalists. ICES, *Critical Education* and *Workplace* promote and defend open access and the principle that making information or research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. *Critical Education* is one of a small handful of journals in the field of education that exclusively publishes articles in the critical social science tradition. *Workplace* was one of the very first online, open access scholarly journals ever, and was founded by a collective of

scholars in higher education, with close ties to the Modern Language Association, particularly the MLA Graduate Student Caucus.

In its short history ICES has been involved with advocacy on public education issues in BC through its own media outlets as well as contributing to mainstream and independent print and broadcast media in BC and nationally on a variety of topics including school curriculum, teaching, education funding, teacher education, academic labour, and education policy. The Institute's major new project is a cohort-based Masters of Education program in Critical Pedagogy and Education Activism (CPEA) through the Faculty of Education at UBC (<http://pdce.educ.ubc.ca/cpea/>). Labour action, appeals to environmentalism, equity and social justice, and private versus public education funding debates challenge teachers to negotiate the fluid boundaries between everyday curriculum and evaluation within the schools and critical analysis and activism in communities and the media. This new program is built on the rationale that teachers, teacher educators, and researchers must realize that intellectual (and political) activism is essential to teaching, learning and evaluation that is transformative.

Based on principles of solidarity, engagement, and critical analysis and research, the CPEA masters program frames education activism as an intentional action with the goal of bringing about positive change in schools and education. An education activist works for positive change at the school level in how teaching and learning are conceptualized and the nature of relationships in education, and also at the workplace and community level in how educational policy, working conditions, and community relations are conceptualized, developed and maintained.

CF: What critical theories and radical pedagogies have had the greatest impact on your thinking? How do you integrate these insights in the classroom and in your research?

EWR: A colleague once described my thinking as heterodox and that's fair. I have been influenced by a wide spectrum of thought and has evolved over time in dramatic ways. Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s in South and North Carolina I lived in the racially segregated world of Jim Crow and as a high school student experienced the tumultuous events of desegregation of schools in Charlotte, NC. My father was a Pentecostal minister and my family life revolved around the church and Christian fundamentalist beliefs, which rejects theological liberalism and cultural modernism. These contexts have had huge impact on my thinking as I struggled with and against authority and hierarchy.

My early career as a social studies teacher and teacher educator was marked by interests in critical sociology of teaching, social psychology, and questions about the relations of individuals and community, particularly as explored in the philosophy of John Dewey. I would say the roots of my thought can be traced to John Dewey's radical reconceptualization of democracy, though Dewey is not a critical theorist. Dewey's notion of democracy cannot be found in the electoral democracies of capitalism. For Dewey, the primary responsibility of democratic citizens is concern with the development of shared interests that lead to sensitivity about repercussions of their actions on others. Dewey characterized democracy as a force that breaks down the barriers that separate people and creates community. The more porous the boundaries of social groups, the more they welcome participation from all individuals, and as the varied groupings enjoy multiple and flexible relations, society moves closer to fulfilling the democratic ideal.

From a Deweyan perspective, democracy is not merely a form of government nor is it an end in itself; it is the means by which people discover, extend, and manifest human nature and human rights. For Dewey, democracy has three roots: free individual existence; solidarity with others; and choice of work and other forms of participation in society. The aim of democratic education and thus a democratic society is the production of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality. While Dewey's democratically informed education philosophy is quite familiar to folks in education, it has largely been influential only conceptually, it's radical potential remains, in almost every respect, unrealized in schools and society.

As part of my doctoral studies in the 1980s, I was immersed in the Frankfurt School critical theory, an interdisciplinary approach to emancipatory social theory. I was particularly influenced by Jürgen Habermas's work on communicative action and communicative rationality. The latter, has been described as free and open discussion of an issue by all relevant persons, with a final decision being dependent upon the strength of better argument, and never upon any form of coercion. In my view, this admittedly idealized construction still has tremendous pedagogical power. Marx, Foucault, and Guy Debord have also loomed large for me, as well as Chomsky's political thought and critique of capitalist media. I've learned much from Bertell Ollman's work on dialectics, alienation, class-consciousness, and ideology (not to mention radical humour). My colleague and collaborator, Rich Gibson, who is an emeritus professor at San Diego State University, has been a tremendous Marx mentor for

me. Gibson has also extended and deepened my understanding of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy.

Kevin D. Vinson and I have worked together for many years and our collaborative work is deeply indebted to the thought of Foucault and Debord, the Marxist theorist and filmmaker who was a founder of the Situationist International. Through Debord, I began to explore anarchist thought and its vast potential for critical educational work. And, I will be teaching a course in 2015 that draws heavily from the deschooling and free school traditions in education. The oppressive and inequitable consequences of authority and hierarchical organizations in social relations – the church, the state, and capitalism –continue to motivate me in my journey that has taken me from a liberal Christian to Deweyan democrat and onward to a concern for creating a society characterized by positive liberty as I continue to struggle with and against authority and hierarchy.

The radical pedagogical principles that emerge from my study of these scholars include: Educators should seek to create conditions in which students can develop personally meaningful understandings of the world and recognize they have agency to act on the world, to make change; Education is not about showing life to people, but bringing them to life. The aim is not getting students to listen to convincing lectures by experts, but getting them to speak for themselves in order to achieve, or at least strive toward an equal degree of participation and better future.

CF: You have written extensively about the challenges of standardized testing. Could you present a snapshot of the debate and briefly explain the promises and perils of “high-stakes accountability” (as you and your colleague Sandra Mathison refer to it)?

EWR: Accountability strategies of neoliberal education reform rely heavily on measuring outcomes, especially student achievement, and attaching consequences, either positive or negative, to various levels of performance (e.g., the stakes involved might be advancement in grade level, assignment to a particular curricular stream, or graduation). These accountability strategies affect everyone and every aspect of schools and schooling at local, regional, national, and international levels.

In most places, outcome-based bureaucratic accountability prevails. This form of accountability holds teachers and schools accountable to government education authorities for producing improvements in student learning outcomes (e.g., test scores). This accountability strategy focuses teachers, administrators, schools, parents, and students on specific forms of limited knowledge and skills. Government agencies

create guides for common content and standards that are manifest in performance on mandated student tests. Accountability, as a concept, is fundamentally an economic interaction in hierarchical, bureaucratic systems, between those who have power and those who do not. It is a state of being in which persons are obligated to answer to others. But complex hierarchical systems, like schools, do not permit those in power to be everywhere and do everything at the same time to achieve what they consider to be desirable outcomes. Consequently, authority is delegated to others, which disperses power to lower levels of the hierarchical system.

When power is delegated and dispersed to those within a hierarchical system, there is an expected return from the investment of that power in others. Those to whom power has been delegated are obligated to answer, or render an account of, the degree of success in accomplishing the outcomes desired by those in power. Because of the diffuse nature of many hierarchical systems, accountability depends on both surveillance and self-regulation. The power of surveillance is born out in part by the spectacle that may result from accounting by those to whom power has been delegated. In other words, the powerful in small numbers are surveilling the performance of many (through means such as standardized tests), which in turn become spectacles observed by the many (as in when schools test scores are reported on the front page of the newspaper). Self-regulation, that is the faithful exercise of delegated authority (teachers, principals, etc.), is in part based on surveillance and the possibility of spectacle, but also on the perception of the legitimacy of those delegating power.

This perceived legitimacy is key to the hegemony of accountability. Hegemony is based on a projection by a dominant group (such as governments and corporate leaders) of their own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it (such as school administrators, teachers, students, parents) accept it as “common sense” or “natural.” These groups subordinated in the hegemony of accountability thus live their subordination, and this subordination is sustained through everyday discourse and practice, as well as in the popular media.

CF: From pre-school to post-secondary education, public funding has often failed to keep pace with inflation. In many ways, this has led to the development of new user-fees, so-called public-private-partnerships and corporate philanthropy. Could you discuss what challenges this ‘privatization by stealth’, as some have called it, poses for publically

funded, universally accessible education? Does corporate sector penetration threaten academic independence?

EWR: Earlier I briefly mentioned that in BC, the government retains its authority over public education, but no longer undertakes the responsibility of assuring the educational well-being of the public. Instead, this responsibility is devolved to individual school boards. This is a fundamental principle of neoliberal government: devolution of responsibility, without authority. Again, as mentioned before, the funding model for public education in BC is based upon the principle that more of our collective wealth should be devoted to maximizing private profits rather than serving public needs and you can see how this plays out in the privatization through the backdoor, or stealth privatization.

For example, the privatization and marketization of public schools in BC is being pursued through multiple strategies: Private schools now receive over \$200 million per year in public funding, with some schools receiving 35-50% of their funding from taxpayers and private schools for low-incidence, severely disabled students receiving 100% public funding; School districts are encouraged to sell seats in public schools to international students. International students pay about \$12,000/year tuition to attend BC public schools, which is about twice as much as the provincial grant for Canadian students in public schools; Public school districts are now allowed to create private, for-profit business companies to set up overseas schools staffed by BC certified teachers teaching the BC provincial curriculum as a way to make up for inadequate government funding; Inadequate funding from the province has pushed local parent groups into more and more fundraising and made schools more vulnerable to corporate incursions, which include advertising and corporate-branded private grants to support core curricular as well as extra-curricular school activities.

A prime example of corporate incursion into public schools is Chevron's "Fuel Your Schools" program, in which the Vancouver School Board recently refused to participate, prompting something of a backlash in corporate-owned media. The basic logic is underfund public education to create opportunities for supposedly altruistic corporations to fill the funding gap. Then you have public schools in the position of relying on the largesse of corporations. In Chevron's case, you have a multinational corporation that runs irresponsible and unsafe operations around the world and in Ecuador, for example, despoiling the lands of indigenous peoples and then running away from \$9.5 billion court judgement for their illegal actions. The "Fuel Your Schools" program is one way

Chevron whitewashes its corporate image, with a pittance of money that does little in terms of closing the serious funding deficits public schools are grappling with in the province. Then when Patti Bacchus, chair of the VSB, rejects the dirty Chevron money, the journalists who do the bidding for the corporate capitalism, like Gary Mason at *The Globe and Mail*, attack Bacchus for being “ideological.” Of course, Chevron is not ideological...

This strategy – underfunding public education to create openings for corporate incursion into schools – is employed globally. In Mexico, Ford and Coca-Cola have undermined academic independence by offering poorly funded public schools money then requiring them to illustrate their effectiveness in the form of improved test scores. Schools become reliant on corporations for basic infrastructure then become obligated to transform teaching and learning into test prep, drill and kill pedagogy aimed at creating a compliant workforce to continue to receive corporate funding.

Here in BC, the Liberals waltzed into the legislature in 2001 and started an unprecedented program of inequitable tax cuts. As a result, BC now has a regressive tax system. A Broadbent Institute report released earlier this year points out that in BC the poor are now paying more in all taxes as a percentage of income than the rich. BC Liberals’ tax cuts over the past 10 years have benefited the richest 1 percent of British Columbians to the tune of \$41,000 per year, while the bottom 40 percent have benefited by an average of \$200 per year. Both the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Conference Board of Canada agree that despite the elimination of the provincial deficit and the recently announced \$353 million surplus, overall spending as a share of the provincial GDP in BC is shrinking and will reach a record low in 2017.

With BC near the bottom in provincial per student education funding and BC teachers near the bottom in average salary, government budgeted only 0.6 per cent increases for K-12 education the next three years. While the provincial budget conservatively projects revenue increases at 8 percent annually, it has budgeted less than a one per cent annual increase in the budget for B.C. schools. It is within this frame that the government’s public relations machine shaped discourse around what was affordable or not in negotiations with teachers and discussions about remedies for illegally stripping the teachers’ contracts of language around class size and composition.

CF: Based on your understanding of events, could you summarize the significance of the 2014 British Columbia teachers’ strike? What

was the position of the Liberal government and why did teachers go on strike? How was the strike received by the broader community and characterized in the press?

EWR: BC has been ruled for over a decade by arguably one of the most successful neoliberal political parties in the world. And the British Columbia Teachers Federation has not shied away from battling against the BC Liberals efforts to make the province into a haven for corporations and wealthy individuals at the expense of working people and the environment. The BC Liberals have closely followed the neoliberal blueprint by cutting taxes for the wealthy, slashing social programs, privatizing state-owned enterprises, goods, and services, and attacking unions, particularly the BCTF. In 2002 the BC Liberal government imposed draconian legislation on public sector workers that overrode provisions in existing collective bargaining agreements – a neoliberal human capital strategy, as I previously mentioned. Bills 27 and 28, which applied to teachers, unilaterally deleted contract provisions that applied to class-size maximum; class composition; staffing levels; support for inclusion of students with special needs; length of the school day; and hours of instruction in the school year.

Over the past decade BCTF has challenged and won legal decisions against the government's actions, yet the government has not complied with the court decisions. These were the key issues in the strike, and the BCTF was able to secure a deal that did not undo their courts wins and provided improvements on class size and composition for BC schools. But their success in protecting these court wins was tempered by failure to get the kind of gains on wages and benefits that would lift teachers to within shouting distance of the Canadian averages. I think there are a few big take away messages from the strike and the settlement. First, neoliberal governments are ruthless in their policies aiming to slash social services budgets so that taxes can be cut for the wealthy and mega tax breaks can be given to corporations. The BC Liberals illustrated they were ready and willing to make teachers hurt financially (and they did) by refusing to negotiate in good faith, until they started to feel the pressure from parents and businesses affected by the strike. Then a few weeks after squeezing the teachers, BC Liberals announced sweetheart tax breaks for the Liquid Nitrogen Gas industry that equal hundreds of millions of dollars.

The second takeaway is that BC teachers continue to put teaching and learning conditions in schools at the top of their priority list. It's not that they don't need, want, or deserve increases in benefits and wages,

but in this settlement individual self-interest took a backseat to issues of learning conditions for students. And, as in the illegal strike in 2005, teachers found that more of the public backed their position compared to the government's. When teachers' unions fight hard for improved teaching and learning conditions they are much more likely to receive broad public support because it illustrates teachers solidarity with the needs and interests of their students. This principle has been proven in other contexts as well, notably the Detroit teachers wildcat strikes, such the one in 1999, which used the slogan "Books, supplies, and lower class size."

Lastly, public dialogue about the strike was dominated by the government's news frame. For example, the deceptive "affordability" narrative that advertising man/education minister Peter Fassbender hammered on for months was accepted at face value by corporate media. This is not surprising given who owns the mainstream media and it highlights the importance of unions and other social movements constructing counter-narratives to one's that serve elite interests. Part of what we have tried to do with the Institute for Critical Education Studies is provide platforms that support progressive policy initiatives and that insert alternative perspectives, drawing from critical research and analysis into the public discussion on teaching, learning, schooling, and academic labour.

CF: Are there parallels to be found here in the university sector? I'm thinking also of the tendency to move away from secure, tenure-track employment to increasingly contractual and precarious arrangements, along with larger classroom sizes for example.

EWR: Absolutely. Despite steady growth in post-secondary enrolments over the past thirty years there has been a parallel decline in the number of full time, tenure track jobs. In the US, over seventy percent of the instruction in post-secondary education is delivered by contingent and part-time professors, with Canadian universities not far behind. The corporate university is now the norm. For example, University of British Columbia's land trust (the provincial endowment to the university) operates completely independently of the academic side of the university. As a result, we have the anomaly of reduced instructional budgets, loss of faculty lines, increases in part-time sessional faculty, and demands that graduate students and faculty bring money into the university to finance their own programs of research and to justify their continued existence. My own department no longer supplies me with toner for my printer; "get a grant for that or use your professional development benefits to buy one," I'm told. For technology and research needs faculty are largely

self-funded. These conditions exist on the academic side, while the university's real estate development program runs in high gear, building and selling on-campus condos for multi-million dollar price tags neither students or faculty can afford.

And, like schools in BC, universities are now selling more and more of their seats to international students who pay about five times more for their education at UBC than Canadian students. Indeed, UBC is currently building an exclusive new stand alone college for international student that will cost nearly \$130 million, which will exclusively enrol international students who will be paying over \$50,000 per year to live and study at UBC. While the university pours money into this venture, there is a waiting list of over 5,000 current students seeking housing on campus. And, of course, there is a crisis of student debt across North America.

CF: In addition to your formal academic writing you also publish extensively in newspapers and magazines, appear on radio and television, and maintain an active social media presence. How does this work complement your scholarly publishing? Do you think critical scholars have a responsibility to engage as public intellectuals?

EWR: Too often the work of academics stays within a small scholarly community, available and often only fully comprehended by a few researchers who are pursuing similar interests. Of course, this circumstance is justifiable as part of the work of academics, but I do believe that as Chomsky asserted in the late 1960s intellectuals also have a responsibility to "speak the truth and expose lies." As Chomsky has pointed out, academics, particularly in the west, are something of a privileged minority (although this is less true now than in the 1960s, with reconstruction of academic work from primarily full time, tenurable positions to contingent labour) who have power that comes from political liberty, access to information, and freedom of expression. Chomsky argued that the responsibilities of intellectuals are thus deeper than the responsibilities of the people.

As a scholar whose work embraces critical social theory I feel a particular obligation to participate in the public discourse on issues relevant to my scholarly work. And my scholarly interests have always been driven, in large part, by social issues. So, for me there is a reciprocal or dialectical relationship between by public engagement and my scholarly work. There are two philosophical statements that I frequently invoke that are relevant to the question.

In *Normative Discourse*, Paul Taylor (1961) says "We must decide what ought to be the case. We cannot discover what ought to be the

case by investigating what is the case.” We – educators and citizens – must decide what ought to be the purpose of schools, education, etc. That requires asking and answering questions like what kind of society (and world) we want to live in. And, Michel Foucault wrote that critique is not merely a matter of saying that things aren’t good the way they are, but that critique is seeing what types of assumptions, of familiar notions, and unexamined ways of thinking that accepted practices are based on. To do criticism, he says, is to make facile gestures difficult. And that is what I try to do in my scholarship and my engagement with the public issues.

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Book Reviews

Book Review

Class Dismissed: Why We Can't Teach Or Learn Our Way Out of Inequality

by John Marsh. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011. \$19.95 CAN, paper. ISBN 978-1-58367-243-3. Pages: 1-217.

Review by Peter Brogan¹

In *Class Dismissed*, John Marsh critically deconstructs the myth or common trope that education is the panacea for alleviating poverty and economic inequality. Drawing on a wide-range of both qualitative and quantitative secondary literature, Marsh makes the case that economic inequality and poverty are rooted in economics and politics, not formal education or the lack thereof. Arguing that it is still important what happens in classrooms across America, Marsh contends, “equality of educational opportunity may not lead to greater equality of outcomes, but that does not mean it has no value” (202).

The book is organized into three parts. The first draws on a wide range of quantitative and qualitative economic and sociological research to detail the depth of the divide between the rich and poor in the United States, which is the widest its been since the 1920s and among developed countries. Here, Marsh demonstrates why the default position of using education to address economic inequality has failed. The second part of the book examines why, when, and how education has come to dominate discussions about “opportunity, prosperity and poverty in American life” (21), as well as alternative ways Americans once imagined they could advance in society (e.g. through collective struggle and a more expansive welfare state) has been pushed out of public policy debates. Marsh also suggests that despite a plethora of evidence to the contrary, many Americans continue to believe that they (and anyone) should be able to learn their way out of poverty. Marsh contends that the belief in the transformative power of education flows from a core desire of many people to want to think that we live in a just world, in which people get what they deserve if they work hard enough and apply themselves in school. However, little effort is made to offer supporting

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evidence or interrogate the cultural mechanisms through which such an ideology takes root in the American context.

In the third and final section of the book, Marsh analyzes economic literature discussing what else it would take besides, or in addition to, a good education to reduce poverty and economic inequality. The author tends towards an explanation of increasing inequality resulting from a decrease in the bargaining power of workers, and unions in particular, therefore placing an emphasis on rebuilding and expanding union strength as the key to genuinely addressing economic inequality and poverty. In this section Marsh also tries to answer why in spite of all the evidence, the “United States has done and appears poised to do so little to act on this consensus [in the sociological and economic literature]” (22). He then turns to a discussion of what ways an education might be beneficial for addressing economic and political problems rooted in social inequality. He makes the case that the best way to improve educational outcomes is by decreasing poverty and inequality in the first place: “The point of this book is that we need to cultivate a new modesty regarding education, to stop believing that it is a magic potion for the poor or for anyone else. Only after we’ve cleared the deck of these mistaken beliefs can we embark on a serious effort to fix these problems” (22).

While it may be the case that “some people may escape poverty and low incomes through education the problem arises when education becomes the only escape route from these conditions – because that road will very quickly become bottlenecked” (19), Marsh argues that despite claims to the contrary, the US economy continues to see an expansion of employment that does not require a college degree. He writes that a “college degree will not make those jobs pay any more than the pittance they currently do...What will make those bartending and other unskilled jobs pay something close to a living wage – if not a living wage itself – constitutes...one of the major public policy challenges of the twenty-first century. Education, however, is not the answer” (20).

Alternatively, Marsh argues that education should be focused on learning for its own sake, rather than seeing a direct correlation between learning for earning. Thus, a good education (however we may define it), according to Marsh, cannot be the solution to economic woes without the necessary expansion of useful, secure, well-paying remunerative jobs. “We should not make economic rights, or economic security more generally, dependent upon how far one goes – of how short one comes up – in exercising his or her right to a good education. Rights are requirements” (203). Concurrently, Marsh is clear that education should serve

the working classes, the poor, and the marginalized, hence we should not completely disregard the impact that schooling can have on one's economic fate. "For it remains the case in the United States today that if someone wants a living wage, if she wants her family to not live in or on the edge of poverty, she had better go to college" (209).

Perhaps the biggest weakness of *Class Dismissed* is that it concludes with too brief a discussion of solutions to poverty and inequality, if not how to improve the substance of education. In general, Marsh points to the expansion of union numbers and strength as key to a more serious strategy for addressing these problems. He also offers a number of moderate proposals to public policy, but does not substantially address the politics of achieving even modest changes. Another limitation is that while Marsh dismantles the mythology of education as the key to upward social mobility, while at the same time acknowledging that education can still have a major positive impact on individuals, he fails to interrogate the relevance of education (broadly conceived) for political struggle, or schools' roles as both sites of ideological reproduction and contestation.

While scholars (such as the late historian Christopher Lasch) have been making similar arguments to that of Marsh for quite some time, the claim that education is the primary vehicle out of poverty continues to dominate public policy across the US and Canada. With an eye to deconstructing these taken-for-granted assumptions, Marsh's book is likely to be of interest to scholars and activists interested in an introduction to education justice.

Book Review

Out of Left Field: Social Inequality and Sports

by Gamel Abdel-Shehid and Nathan Kalman-Lamb. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2011. \$19.95 CAN, paper. ISBN: 978-1-55266-439-1. Pages: 1-135.

Reviewed by Christine Pich¹

Out of Left Field provides an engaging and clearly written text with the double aim of introducing a sociological perspective towards understanding high-performance sports and emphasizing the usefulness of critical theory in doing so. Being an introductory text, critical theory is defined in a straightforward manner as encompassing “a basic assumption: the world we live in is fundamentally unequal” (6), with inequality conceptualized as the enjoyment of privileges for certain groups of people “at the expense of others who are marginalized and whose marginalization those privileges rely” (2). The central argument of the book - that “in a capitalist society [...] sport as spectacle serves to further the interests of capital” (9) - is made with respect to a Marxist theoretical approach where it emphasizes the centrality of economic inequality and situates social inequalities in broader historical processes of capitalism and colonialism. However, it further challenges the reader to consider the continuous production and reproduction of interconnected forms of inequality (e.g., ‘race’, gender, sexuality), and how these are not homogenous sites of oppression. In drawing upon primary and secondary scholarly literature, the authors discuss an array of theoretical ideas including those of Michel Foucault, Benedict Andersen, and bell hooks, and develop their argument by tying their discussion back to the necessity of considering economic factors, such as commercialization and profit motives, towards understanding high-performance sports.

The book is organized into three main parts with the first looking at the nature of sports, the second considering the influence of inequalities upon identity in sports, and the third exploring sports’ impact on broader societal views and beliefs. As noted, the focus is specifically on ‘high-performance sport’, which is defined as “elite, often professional

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sport" (5), with examples including team-based sports, individual athletes, and periodic large-scale events such as the Olympics. The rationale for this selection is based upon the strong influence that this level of sports has upon sports more generally, as it constitutes an aspirational model through which sports are constructed and played. Each chapter addresses a different sociological aspect of understanding sport, with a fairly comprehensive scope that covers areas such as normative masculinity, film, imperialism, and spectacle.

In connection with its stated aims, a particular strength of the book is its overall organization, as it is formatted in a way to clearly introduce core ideas from various critical theoretical approaches and identify social problems related to sports. The authors are cognizant of not taking academic ideas for granted. Rather they succinctly define the meaning of key concerns (such as the importance of social context in reading theoretical literature) and concepts (e.g., feminism, ideology, modernity). All key terms are bolded within the text, with a glossary of these terms being included at the end of the book. The chapters are also clearly designated and discussed, with each chapter engaging with a few core ideas from a short list of selected authors. In considering the introductory format of this book, however, one key tension was that in arguing for a structural approach, the authors could have been more explicit in acknowledging other frameworks (e.g., post-structuralism) and debates (e.g., structure and agency) as a way to clearly present these ideas to the reader and to strengthen their own argument around the important impacts of broader societal forces.

The book contributes to sociological literature in two central ways. First, the authors acknowledge that Marxist discussion towards sports has been quite critical – for instance, by dismissing it as a spectacle – and while the authors encourage such critical analysis, they also argue that sports has the potential to be a site of transformation where it could encompass leisure, pleasure, and social cohesion. That is to say, they argue that sports are not in themselves the problem; what is of concern is how sports are undertaken and the purposes they serve in capitalist societies. Second, by engaging with an array of literature the authors add multi-dimensionality to their discussion by considering not only how various identity-based inequalities interact with economic inequalities, but also by emphasizing the significance of what non-Western and multinational perspectives may reveal. For example, in drawing upon the work of Eduardo Galeano, who wrote about sports in the context of imperialism in Latin America, the authors highlight how people may

turn to sports to find pleasure and resistance in otherwise repressive environments.

While the intention of the book is to provide a foundational level text, some points nevertheless require a slightly more nuanced analysis. For instance, in arguing for the usefulness of a Marxist lens towards understanding the exploitation and commodification of the labour of professional athletes, they present the example of team owners in the National Basketball Association (NBA) extracting surplus value from the labour of their players, even if the player is getting paid multi-millions of dollars per year. To be sure, the authors do make many convincing points, including how the players are working for the benefit of the owners, how many athletes are not paid such high amounts, and how some athletes have the benefit of a celebrity status that other workers do not. However, there is a lack of sufficient discussion about further qualitative distinctions and theoretical complexities in using similar concepts to understand the labour of high-performance athletes and that of workers who are employed in more traditional fields, such as manufacturing or service. For example, do we require more of a multi-pronged analysis in order to better understand the inequalities experienced not only between athletes and workers, but also between differently positioned athletes? Although the authors acknowledge that economic inequalities have lessened in recent decades for some athletes due to higher salaries, there was a lack of clarity surrounding the theoretical implications of this for a class analysis.

Overall the accessible style and tone of this book, with clearly presented key concepts and theoretical ideas, as well as its engagement with relevant issues from high-performance sports, provides a useful text for introductory level undergraduate courses in sociology, sociology of sport, and sociological theory.

Book Review

Reconsidering Knowledge: Feminism and the Academy

edited by Meg Luxton and Mary Jane Mossman. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2012. \$29.95 CAN, paper. ISBN: 978-1-552266-476-6. Pages: 1-168.

Reviewed by Jordan Fairbairn¹

In 2009, a group of feminist academics at York University participated in a lecture series revisiting key themes from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)'s 1984 collection *Knowledge Reconsidered: A Feminist Overview*. The lectures were held with the aim of "refocusing the lens on feminist knowledge in the academy" (15). This book is the literary product of these lectures.

The seven substantive chapters in the book deal with one or more of three central themes: 1) the importance of feminist knowledge production; 2) challenges posed by neoliberal approaches to education and university corporatization; and 3) feminist scholarship as a form of activism and/or resistance to the increasingly corporate university environment. As a whole, this is a collection rich in reflexive analysis of how knowledge production shapes, and is shaped by, the environment in which it occurs. In chapter one, Meg Luxton explores the transformative nature of feminist scholarship on the academy while effectively demonstrating through the discussion of gendered distribution of elite research positions in Canada that academia is not exempt from patterns of inequality.

In chapter two, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty further explore the politics of knowledge construction by mapping transnational feminism throughout women's studies and LGBTTT/queer studies syllabi in U.S. colleges and universities. The author's conceptual use of cartographies to map histories and geographies of power is a significant contribution, as is their challenge to the academic/activist divide so often employed in academic discourse (see Eschle and Manguerra, 2006). Chapter three shifts from feminist knowledge in the academy to a focus on sexuality research in a global context. Here, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

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reminds that in exploring the politics of knowledge construction it is important to explore not only what knowledge is created, but also what terms or concepts remain absent. To this end, Young-Bruehl provides the example of “childism” to illustrate the conceptual absence of terms to speak of groups that disproportionately inflict harm on children (e.g. child pornographers, child sex traffickers, armies recruiting child soldiers). While the argument that there is increased global tolerance for multisexuality (sexual identities outside binary understandings of sex and gender) is convincing, the implication that this will naturally lead to an understanding of sexual minorities as “different but equal” (73) is less so given the lack of historical evidence of this occurring.

Part two of *Reconsidering Knowledge* shifts from exploring feminism and knowledge production to consider current neoliberal influences on the university and the implications for its role in knowledge production. In chapter four, Margaret Thornton unpacks the concept of “neoliberalism” and focuses on three central phases in the university’s evolution (modernization, feminization, corporatization). Thornton argues that we have entered a period of focus on a “new knowledge” economy, which has enabled “the remasculization of the economy behind a façade of rationality, neutrality, and technocratic knowledge” (77). While overall a convincing chapter and important contribution, considering the focus on the book (feminism and the academy), I found more explanation of feminization and remasculization to be needed, in particular a more clear distinction between remasculization and neoliberalism. In chapter five, Janice Newson situates neoliberalism within the university “on-the-ground” through an analysis of how universities have responded to policy changes that “promote the corporatized trajectory” (98). A significant contribution of this chapter is its resistance to the notion that neoliberalism simply “happened” to universities, absent of any agency of the actors within. Instead, Newson argues for complex (and reflexive) analysis, provocatively suggesting that we consider the academic attitudes and practices that have allowed, and may even be implicated in “the shift of the university towards more commercially oriented endeavours” (97). Although further unpacking is needed around how to separate attitudes and practices from their institutional context, I found the author’s detailed use of historical explanation of policy development as a multi-faceted process convincing as an initial argument for reflexivity.

In the final section of this collection, chapters six and seven illustrate the research richness that comes from applying feminist lenses to cultural histories. In her discussion of Bluestockings and Goddesses, Ann Shteir

draws from mythology and iconography to challenge feminists to “take the past more seriously” (130) when pursuing present-day scholarship and activism. In particular, Shteir identifies new technologies and digitized materials as tools to opening up new (or freshly revisited) research avenues. In reconsidering the past through feminist praxis, Shteir summarizes a core idea of this collection: that we must remember that “scholarship is activism too, and we should be making it work for us” (147). In the concluding chapter, Lorraine Code moves themes of reflexivity, feminist praxis, and the politics of knowledge production back on front stage by analyzing the work of eminent marine biologist Rachel Carson (1907-1964) in “unsettling” key tenets of scientific knowledge and practice in the twentieth century.

Overall, *Reconsidering Knowledge* does important work through connecting core themes of social inequality, transformative knowledge, and the role and purpose of feminism and the university in our current social world. Despite the eclectic mixture of chapter subject matter, the revisiting and resurfacing of feminist praxis and reflexive knowledge production as core themes holds this book together well; part of its success may, therefore, lie in highlighting that these important strands of debate transcend perceived boundaries of subject matter. Yet given the vastness of feminism as a theoretical orientation, and the absence of explicit discussions and definitions of feminism in many chapters, an editorial introduction and conclusion would have been helpful to bring together the contributors’ various theoretical lenses as well as to increase accessibility of the text more broadly. Nonetheless, this collection is a valuable read, not only for those committed to feminism and its role and relationship in the academy, but also for scholars and students concerned more broadly with the expansion of neoliberalism in universities and the politics of knowledge production. While *Reconsidering Knowledge* provides plenty of reasons to be concerned about entrenched resistance to feminist research and activism, it remains optimistic and steadfast about feminism’s transformative potential and critical importance in scholarship and activism, or, perhaps more accurately, scholarship-as-activism.

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Book Review

Imperial Canada Inc.: Legal Haven of Choice for the World's Mining Industries

by Alain Deneault and William Sacher. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2012. \$29.95 Canada/U.S., paper. ISBN: 978-0-88922-635-7. Pages: 1-244.

Reviewed by J.Z. Garrod¹

Imperial Canada Inc. begins with a very simple question: why are 75 percent of the world's mining corporations registered in Canada? Alain Deneault and William Sacher attempt to answer this question by, first, providing a history of Canada's questionable stock exchanges which promote irresponsible financial speculation and, second, through a case study of Quebec's mining sector demonstrating the significant weight and enduring presence of colonialism in Canada.

The first section of the book is split into two parts: 'The Argument,' and 'The History.' In the argument chapter, Deneault and Sacher make the case that Canada has become a legal haven for the global mining industry. Building on Deneault's (2011) previous work on tax havens, the authors claim that there are a number of different advantages that the Canadian state offers global mining firms:

1. Unlimited speculation on resources through extremely permissive, self-regulating, stock-exchanges that have extremely ambiguous distinctions between 'resources' and 'reserves';
2. Tax advantages for investors, and the export of Canadian mining investment policies to other countries via agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB);
3. The use of diplomacy to put pressure on foreign countries, as well as providing mining corporations with legal cover by failing to charge them for various human rights abuses;

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4. The utilization of the law to silence critics (see Deneault and Sacher's earlier book, *Noir Canada*, which was pulled due to a lawsuit from Barrick Gold Corp) through particularly restrictive libel laws and through institutions such as the WB, in which it files complaints demanding damages from governments who refuse to authorize resource exploitation;
5. The support of global mining corporations through a 'made-in-Canada' propaganda offensive through the education system, in which these corporations provide funding, advertising, and other philanthropic activities, including the development of provincial science curriculums;
6. 'Diplomacy of convenience,' in which the Canadian state provides overseas diplomatic support within a context in which there is a revolving door between high-level politics and the mining industry.

In the historical chapter, Deneault and Sacher focus more explicitly on the wealth of Canadian political economy scholarship to demonstrate how Canada has always been a jurisdiction based on speculation from London and European capital markets trading on land, railways, and mines. They argue that this speculation was made possible by virtue of the extremely close linkages between state officials and capitalists who, in Canadian history, were often the same person. In other words, those who created and enforced the laws did so for the purposes of personal gain. In order to reproduce these profits, Canadian capitalists have long focused on foreign investment to fund short-term profit-making endeavours, such as the railways, regardless of whether or not they were suitable for commercial or industrial purposes, or whether they were even built at all.

The rest of the book consists of a case study of Quebec's mining sector. In it, Deneault and Sacher claim that Quebec "might as well be called a mineral state" (128) given the extent to which the provincial government has been appropriated by the mining sector. In fact, despite the influence of the Quiet Revolution, they note that key positions in the industry are still held by English-speaking Canadian and foreign investors. Ranked as "the most favourable jurisdiction for mining" by the Fraser Institute, Quebec continually subjugates environmental and labour concerns under the concerns of corporate profit. To avoid public pressure, the

government uses the 'strategy' of public consultation and negotiation, which provides for a veneer of democracy, without any decision-making power invested in the consulting bodies. Similarly, public investment in the mining sector is high, providing public financial and logistic support, alongside government programs to aid such firms. Such practices aid an industry that for a century has been engaging in ecological crime and the dispossession of aboriginal peoples. Quebec is thus the 'standard' that the industry would like to see replicated worldwide.

In their conclusion, Deneault and Sacher call for Canadians to demand greater regulation and oversight of these corporations, and for legal action to be taken against them. The problem, however, is whether this remains possible given the structure of global capitalism today. Despite their extremely sound empirical work, Deneault and Sacher fail to engage with a growing debate on the character and nature of contemporary globalization and imperialism (see Hardt and Negri, 2000; Harvey, 2003; Robinson, 2004; and Wood, 2003). The absence of an engagement with this literature raises many questions as to whether the relations of global capitalism fundamentally challenge the autonomy and sovereignty of the national state, and thus, the ability of national states to regulate transnational corporations – and this is above and beyond the question of whether globalization can be considered a novel form of imperialism. Indeed, despite being part of the book's title, imperialism is left undefined throughout and there is no discussion as to why we should understand the practices of the Canadian state as being imperialistic. For example, one might ask why it would be imperialistic for Canada to defend a Belgian mining company registered in Canada whose primary operations are located in Central America? Without engaging with fundamental theoretical questions about the nationality of capital today, the reader is left to wonder whether these practices are evidence of a more profound shift in the global political economy, rather than imperialism.

Similarly, there is little engagement with the renewed debate over whether Canada should be understood as a dependent or imperial country (see Kellogg, 2005; Klassen, 2009; Stanford, 2008; and Watkins, 2007). By engaging with this debate, Deneault and Sacher might be able to better explain Canada's particular history of colonization – being both a colony of the British Empire and a colonizer of both Quebecois and indigenous populations here in Canada – and now abroad via destructive mining practices. As it stands, the book simply argues a rather basic point: that the Canadian state serves the interests of "speculators

and exploiters of the resources of the world's land" (185). In this sense, there is a feeling that the authors are suggesting that the Canadian state simply reproduces the practices of colonialism for the interests of the ruling class, but without any discussion over whether globalization is a qualitatively novel epoch in the history of world capitalism, the reader is left to speculate whether this ruling class is more transnational than national, and whether or not this might have some bearing on the book's conclusions (see the debates on the character of the contemporary ruling class by Mann et al., 2001). Some further engagement with the wider literature and debates of global political economy scholarship would greatly help to both contextualize and sharpen their argument.

In any case, *Imperial Canada Inc.* sheds light on the practices of an incredibly opaque, destructive industry, and for that alone the book is extremely valuable. Students of global and Canadian political economy will find much of interest here and indeed, the sections outlining the ways in which these mining corporations have entered the educational sphere might hit a little close to home. Interested scholars should especially keep an eye on Deneault's forthcoming book *Canada: A New Tax Haven*. One can only hope that this book will address some of the shortcomings of *Imperial Canada Inc.* and continue to provide a critical view of contemporary Canadian political economy.

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Book Review

Paved With Good Intentions: Canada's Development NGOs From Idealism to Imperialism

by Nikolas Barry-Shaw and Dru Oja Jay. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2012. \$24.95 CAN, paper. ISBN: 978-1-55266-399-8. Pages: 1-303.

Reviewed by Madalena Santos¹

Paved With Good Intentions provides a critical perspective on the negative impacts of Canadian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) projects in relation to achieving the goals of equality and social justice in countries that are not considered to be part of the West (i.e.: Canada, the United States, or Western Europe), or what the authors refer to as the "Global South." Citing various studies from NGO specialists such as Sangeeta Kanat and Michael Edwards, James Petras, Eboe Hutchful, Mike Davis, Laura Macdonald, Tina Wallace, and Arundhati Roy, the authors situate their work within an anti/decolonial framework that seeks to achieve social justice from the bottom up. They examine the power of donors in controlling the direction and focus of development NGOs, which they contend reinforce colonial legacies of resource extraction and genocidal policies in the name of benevolence. The authors provide a nuanced yet perhaps contentious view of NGO work suggesting NGOs have become at best toothless critics which define the limits of dissent, and at worst proponents of Canadian imperial interventions. They distinguish between development NGOs and humanitarian NGOs, although they devote less space to the latter. In their view, humanitarian NGOs provide assistance for short periods of relief efforts such as during natural disasters, for example, while development NGOs try to alter the fundamental ways in which societies are organized. In their own words: "We consider development NGOs to be distinct from humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian action seeks to alleviate episodic instances of suffering, whereas development work seeks to address the root causes of poverty" (14).

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Going further, Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay define development NGOs as “professionalized, non-profit organizations that depend on CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] for funding and whose primary aim is to permanently remedy poverty in the Third World” (13). Yet while the stated goal of these NGOs is to eliminate poverty, the authors show how development NGOs often present a paternalistic view of poverty that is unconcerned with power relations and structural or systemic change, but instead emphasizes the individualized goals of “empowerment” and “participation” through projects such as micro-credit financing that are closely tied to neoliberal market reforms. They explain how neoliberal ideology promotes greater economic liberalization, privatization, free trade, open markets, deregulation, and reductions in government spending in the public sector in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy. They claim that the work of development NGOs not only fails to link development to state politics and ideology, but also disrupts local grassroots activism that attempts to effect transformational change through efforts such as wealth redistribution. In short, they argue that NGOs obscure their own role in implementing neoliberal reform through what they call the political project of “NGOization” or “privatization by NGO” (44).

Over the course of ten chapters, *Paved With Good Intentions* covers a number of areas in the study and analysis of NGOs offering a succinct history of NGOs in Canada that traces changes within the goals and aspirations of NGOs to foreign policy and the geopolitical climate of the day from the fear of Communism to the rise and continuance of neoliberal policies and the link to Western imperial military interventions. Using a structural analysis that examines the underlying systems and methods of development, the authors convincingly argue what they understand as the myth of the benevolent Canadian NGO, which they contend has never existed. The authors draw attention to the dependence of NGOs on government financial support, which now sees the typical development NGO relying on federal funding for over 50% of its annual budget (59). According to Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay, the increase in government money for development work limits and at times prevents NGOs from critiquing the Canadian state, in particular Canada’s foreign state policies. Tracing the origin of development NGOs in Canada to the Cold War era of the 1950s, Barry-Shaw and Oja Jay provide the historical context for the current growth of neoliberal policies and free trade agreements. The ongoing era of “globalization,” which the authors contend is really a euphemism for capitalistic expansion, has increased NGO

bureaucratization and collaboration with the state, as well as the simultaneous suppression of social justice and anticapitalist activists.

Barry-Shaw and Dru Ojay discuss the radicalization of NGOs during the 1960s and 1970s, which saw projects put into practice based on a Friirian pedagogical approach concerned with the “uprooting of unjust political and economic structures and systems” (144). They show how this period of radical development was stifled through government cuts to funding in the 1980s furthering the depoliticization of resistance and the relationship of dependency of the Global South on the Global North through clientalism and the cooptation of development projects. The professionalization of NGO projects, the authors go on to argue, helps to maintain or create an educated minority of middle and upper class elite who are not interested in change that would redistribute wealth and make structural and systemic transformations to relations of power that would actually eliminate poverty. Much of the money spent on NGO “development” for instance goes to training and the institutionalization of projects rather than going directly to beneficiaries. Moreover, they point out how NGO workers from the Global North who work in the Global South reinforce colonial relations where race, class, and gender play a significant role in establishing and maintaining relations of social and economic privilege (42).

The book offers concrete examples of the destructive outcomes of development NGOs in a number of countries, including Haiti, Palestine, Honduras, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. The authors discuss how development NGOs have not only been ineffective in making the substantial changes needed to create more equitable and just societies in the Global South, but have actually lead to greater violence and injustice in these countries through support and imposition of corrupt regimes. They present Haiti as an extreme yet significant example of the connection between development NGOs, the neoliberal goals of Canada, France, and the US, and the violent criminalization and marginalization of popular dissent. In this case, they detail how the Canadian government helped to overthrow the democratically elected and popularly supported President Aristide through the use of military force while providing NGOs with the funds necessary to undermine Aristide’s popular *Fanmi Lavalas* movement, which was overwhelmingly supported by the Haitian poor who form the majority of Haiti’s population. While more needs to be said about the neocolonial legacy of NGO development and the exacerbation of colonial legacies in the Global North, *Paved With Good Intentions* underscores the possibilities for transformational change that can come

about through solidarity work that centres the aims and strategies of people working for justice and recognizes the connections between the struggles of peoples across international borders.

Book Review

Resisting the State: Canadian History Through the Stories of Activists,

by Scott Neigh. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2012. \$24.95 CAN, paper. ISBN: 978-1-55266-520-6. Pages: 1-227.

Reviewed by Amanda Joy¹

Resisting the State is one of two books in which author Scott Neigh explores the history of Canadian social justice activism through the experiences of longtime organizers. The second book focuses on issues of gender and sexuality, while *Resisting the State* is organized around movements targeting the state in some way, such as anti-poverty work, immigration policy and anti-racism. Neigh refers to his approach as “history from below”: whereas we normally learn history from the top down, focusing on elites, institutions and “great men,” he argues that it is not only the powerful who create social and political change. Instead, he shows us the course of history as collectively made through the struggles of regular people in both big and small ways.

Neigh introduces his readers to eight activists in six chapters. These include Isabel and Frank Showler, a couple of pacifists whose radical Christian beliefs led them to resist the Second World War; Charles Roach, a Trinidadian-Canadian lawyer who repeatedly challenged racism and colonialism in the course of his work; and Lynn Jones, a labour activist who fought racism from within the labour movement. We also meet Kathy Mallett and Roger Obonsawin, who have worked with indigenous communities and families in Canadian cities, bringing leadership to Friendship Centres and other indigenous-led organizations; Don Weitz, an anti-psychiatry activist who helped to develop a radical anti-psychiatry magazine; and Josephine Grey, a human rights activist who has worked with and on behalf of poor communities in Ontario.

Neigh’s approach to telling these stories is to use individual biographies as “nodes” from which to tease out “strands” that can be followed to investigate the social relations in which they are embedded. Each chapter begins with relevant context on the historical moment

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in Canadian society and politics, including both an explanation of the problems that the activist is struggling against, as well as the theoretical underpinnings needed to give insight into their perspective and actions. For example, in the chapter on Lynn Jones, Neigh gives a brief history of Black Nova Scotians, followed by some background on slavery and how capitalism has organized different “kinds” of people to do different types of work; he then discusses race, gender and work in the Canadian context. He approaches social theory at an introductory level, incorporating critiques of nationalism, colonialism, capitalism and racism into his historical narratives.

Neigh writes in solidarity with his subjects by describing them and their struggles in their own terms. While he comes from a radical, anti-authoritarian perspective, his subjects come from a more diverse range of viewpoints and backgrounds. Some work from within state systems to effect concrete changes for their communities, and others organize from outside, and in opposition to, the state. The majority of the activists profiled have been involved in either grassroots community organizing or in organizing through official channels, such as the legal system, while only a couple were involved in protest and direct action organizing. The choice of who to include in the book seems to be guided by a desire for a diversity of movements, regions and identities, and in this respect Neigh is quite successful.

Neigh’s approach is reflexive, continually positioning himself by relaying his own autobiography and learning process as it relates to each chapter. In the chapter on Josephine Grey’s anti-poverty work, Neigh describes his own middle-class upbringing, his relationship to money, and how he came to learn about poverty through his activist involvement. He makes himself and his own journey present in his writing, and in the process invites readers to evaluate their own positions in relation to power and oppression.

Because these stories span decades of activist organizing, Neigh is able to detail not only some inspiring victories, but also the ebb and flow of movements over time, including what happens when movements fizzle out. In chapter 3, indigenous activist Kathy Mallett describes how making gains can be a double-edged sword, contributing to complacency or causing the community to lose focus. Similarly, in chapter 4, Lynn Jones describes the difficulty of engaging a community in struggle over the long term, particularly when people are putting in a lot of volunteer work; in her case, people began to burn out after achieving a significant

victory. For activists, there are important lessons to be learned from the histories described here, both from victories and failures.

One criticism is that the scope and intent of the book does not appear to match up with what Neigh actually delivers. Although the book's introduction frames the project as offering an alternative Canadian history, what Neigh delivers is a partial history of struggle against the Canadian state, told through the stories of a collection of activists and organizers. A narrowed scope would help to keep the stories in focus and prevent the book from seeming fragmented. The book would also benefit from a more thorough discussion of what ties the chapters together, and of what is uncovered by studying activist history "from below." For example, how is this perspective more insightful than what is offered by "top-down" historians? It would be nice to see Neigh in conversation with other scholars for this reason, but direct engagement with other historians is notably absent.

Neigh's greatest strength and contribution is in personalizing important moments in the history of resistance in Canada. The personalities of the profiled activists, most of whom are now seniors, shine through in Neigh's writing, and this makes for engaging reading. Scholars of Canadian history or activism may find Neigh's personal approach to these subjects a refreshing change from a more top-down history, while remaining accessible to social justice activists providing insights from prior generations.

Book Review

Yellow Ribbons: The Militarization of National Identity in Canada

by A.L. McCready. Winnipeg, Manitoba and Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2013. \$18.95 CAN, paper. ISBN: 978-1-55266-580-0. Pages: 1-128.

Reviewed by Shannon T. Speed¹

Post-9/11 there have been many changes to Canadian military practices both domestically and internationally. In *Yellow Ribbons: The Militarization of National Identity in Canada*, McCready sets out to contextualize the cultural “shift” of an increasingly militarized Canada as reflected in Canadian national identity. An overarching theoretical framework for this book is not specifically laid out, but the idea of national identity ties each chapter together. Through consideration of both military support campaigns and radio/television productions, McCready argues that Canada’s peacekeeping history is used to justify current imperialist military practices.

A motivation for this project stems from a concern that campaigns and cultural productions have shifted in focus from supporting soldiers to validating military spending. Contextualizing military practices within an environment of Canadian multiculturalism, McCready distinguishes between 1) state ‘militarism,’ the belief in the funding, maintenance, and support of militaries and armaments, and 2) ‘militarization,’ a deep and cultural process through which society adheres to the significance of militarism. The author analyses both ideologies in connection with neoliberalism, race, and gender.

McCready acknowledges that this book may be received as unsupportive of the troops, and is upfront regarding its controversial content. The topic of war and military service can be polarizing, but McCready successfully addresses a wide-range of stances on military support and spending and explains there, at times flawed, logic. McCready ends the introductory chapter with a brief reference to the notion of “make live or let die” and “protofacism,” neither of which are carefully defined, explained, or contextualized. Key ideas such as

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'culture' and 'national identity' are left for the reader to interpret, which is problematic as they are crucial to the author's argument.

In the second chapter, McCready provides a discussion of how the myth of Canada being a "nation of peacekeepers" allows for the advancement of a "new" militarism (31). Referencing Canadian literature on race and multiculturalism, McCready notes how Canada's domestic history of colonialism is erased by a global peacekeeping image. A thorough history of yellow ribbons as an image of war is presented from its origins in America to its Canadian use. The author argues that the many uses of the commodified yellow ribbon have resulted in it no longer having a single message. It "binds together the often contradictory narratives and affective impulses of militarism and national idealism" (41).

McCready connects the semi-privatized organization of the yellow ribbon "Support our Troops" campaign to neoliberalism and privatized defense, arguing that militarization is a contested notion. This is illustrated by poll results cited by McCready, indicating that Canadians differentiate between their support for the war in Afghanistan and those fighting in it, although political decision makers conflate this. The author argues that the yellow ribbon is a performative and declarative act that presents a sense of collective identity. McCready goes on to argue that the yellow ribbon is also linked to white privilege through its use in 1992 to show support for those defending the beating of Rodney King, and again in 1993 to show support for prison guards held hostage in a racially motivated prison uprising.

Another public display of supporting the troops presented by McCready is the Highway of Heroes phenomenon. Despite quoting the reason for the initial gathering on an overpass in Port Hope being to show "support and condolences for the families" (54), McCready contextualizes this phenomenon within patriarchy and the "crisis of masculinity" through an examination of the campaign's key supporters and its emphasis on the masculine figure of the soldier. Although relevant to the book, the Highway of Heroes phenomenon is not clearly connected to the literature nor is it located within the "cultural shift" referred to by the author.

The third chapter is an analysis of cultural productions that provide a link between militarization, entertainment, and industry. McCready looks at Canadian Forces recruiting ads, the CBC Radio show *Afghanada*, and the Canadian film production *Passchendaele*. The politics, funding, and support of each of these productions are examined, providing insight into the power of each as contributing to Canadian military culture, and

consequently Canadian national identity. Furthermore, the author identifies particular themes for Canadian Forces recruitment ads released in 2006 – the ‘adventure’ ad and the ‘helping’ ad – both of which, McCready concludes, deviate from war-like imagery in favour of showing instances of altruism. McCready suggests that this is a rather alarming reflection of the Canadian military as it reinforces a misleading image of Canada’s role as ‘peacekeeper’ having created “a military role for itself as moral authority and enforcer and arbiter of democracy” (78). McCready’s subsequent analysis of CBC Radio’s *Afghanada* and the film *Passchendaele* provides a detailed description of each production in addition to their financial and political patronage. According to McCready, these productions indicate that militarization has seeped into what is referred to as the ‘national imagination’ through cultural production. Here, further consideration of audience demographics and opinion may be useful in order to prevent overplaying what McCready admits are formulaic productions that are not new in their premise or representations.

McCready’s conclusion of having located “the new Canadian exceptionalism” as “an emerging cultural and political idiom” is unconvincing as it is the first mention of this idea (111). A summary of literature is used to explain exceptionalism as change, newness, the circumvention of laws, exclusion, colonialism, and ‘Canadian nationalism becoming American.’ Though exceptionalism is applicable to some Canadian practices, this idea is not traced throughout the book, nor does the author’s general analysis amount to one of exceptionalism.

This book has many important ideas and is an admittedly ambitious project, but would have added impact with a better-organized and more in-depth discussion of the case studies and their main significance. It is difficult to situate *Yellow Ribbons* within the literature because the fundamental concepts are not carefully defined and aligned with those of other authors. The concluding chapter begins by characterizing *Yellow Ribbons* as having focused on the “transformation” of Canadian culture, whereas introductory discussions indicate a “cultural shift.” This book’s contribution would benefit from an explicit conceptual outline, a consistent trajectory, and clearer connections to the literature. Overall, McCready offers a descriptive and unapologetically critical look at the militarization of Canadian national identity.

Book Review

The New Old World

by Perry Anderson, New York: Verso Press, 2009. \$39.95 US. ISBN: 978-1-84467-312-4. Pages 1-561.

Reviewed by Aaron Henry¹

Perry Anderson's *The New Old World* (NOW) interrogates both the historical processes through which Europe emerged and the forces that structure the European Union (EU) polity today. In some respects, the historical scope, detail, and length of the text make it an impossible object to review beyond a mere recap of broad themes. So what is the theme of NOW? In two sentences: 'Europe is Dead. Long Live Europe!' The focus of NOW is the tumultuous history of Europe, its declines, its renewals, and its periods of malaise. Anderson's primary argument is that Europe has now entered a period of economic, political, social, and cultural decline.

Although decline is the guiding thread that binds this study together the structure of NOW and its method of analysis is very much in the character of comparative politics. NOW is laid out in four parts: The Union, The Core, The Eastern Question, and Conclusion. Anderson's focus is predominately on five member states – France, Germany, and Italy are used to analyze the established core of Europe; Turkey and Cyprus are mobilized not only to tilt the geo-physical borders of the EU but also point to the ahistorical nature of 'integration.' While in these individual studies Anderson develops a number of insights and detailed historical biographies, each study is used to demonstrate the stagnation or decline of the EU polity.

In what increasingly appears as an endangered method, Anderson examines his case studies through a historical materialist analysis. He deftly weaves economic transformations to ruptures in intellectual conditions - his analysis of Germany from philosophy to visual art is most striking (266-277) - cultural developments and sea-change shifts in national politics. The linkages and relations that Anderson offers between these spheres are well constructed and ensure that the

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'economic' does not emerge as an overly determinative site. Drawing on statistics of economic growth, education and art, Anderson argues that Europe is adrift, economically stagnant, intellectually torpid and falling under the thumb of American imperium. Though spanning the registers of the historical, economic, social and cultural, Anderson's erudite focus on the intellectual history of Europe is where the work shines brightest. The conclusion of the project consolidates this theme and reveals much of Anderson's purpose in *NOW*.

NOW concludes with a discussion of the displacement of Christendom within Europe, a shift, Anderson notes, that was not fully solidified even in the seventeenth century. Working from this transition, Anderson focuses on the making of Europe in both 'left' and 'conservative' traditions. This intellectual history combs the lives and works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Kautsky, Saint-Simon and Schlegel, and Monnet, to name but a few. This conclusion serves to align the text's case studies with a much longer historical trajectory. As Anderson outlines, the intellectual history of Europe was one characterized by disequilibrium and equilibrium, a progression of historical forces pushed by 'left' and 'right', without either ever obtaining intellectual hegemony (504). Rather, it is in the course of struggle that Europe inherited the bedrock of ideas that would cyclically create and destroy it. Knowing his audience, Anderson does not belabor this point. The history of Europe is as much bound up with the intellectual tradition of dialectics, as it is dialectical. The primacy Anderson accords between productive and vibrant intellectual thought underscores his preoccupation with the declining intellectual culture that has taken hold of Europe today.

Although the technocratic class is a running theme in *NOW*, the subtlety with which it is handled gives it an ethereal character throughout the text. Of course, Europe is no stranger to specters so it is not surprising that Anderson's account contains a few of them. We are given glimpses of its processes of class formation, a neoliberal social form born of 1980s restructuring. We see its affects on political ingenuity and its formative role in the disconnect between democratic participation and the supranational offices of the EU; however, much like in political practice, the technocratic class rarely shows face. Indeed, while the subtlety that Anderson develops in this treatment can be appreciated, foregrounding the intellectual hegemony of the technocratic class would have served to bind some elements of the project closer together.

Furthermore, in a lengthy chapter entitled "Theories", Anderson devotes nearly sixty pages in what appears to be a literature review.

However, on closer inspection Anderson develops an important point here. The chapter demonstrates that the best work in European studies is the product of American political scientists. Thus, EU funding bodies have generated an insular 'techno-academocratic' culture that is aloof to "wide public consciousness" and is in terms of its style and purpose "as technical as the regulations and directives of Brussels [itself]" (80). Thus, the review of the literature on the European Union doubles as an indictment of the colonization of the intellectual conditions in the EU by a technocratic culture. Sadly, this provocation remains underdeveloped and the reader is left with the task of mining out its significance to the project at large. Written before the 2008 crisis, *NOW* also suffers from the absent presence of the financial crisis. To his credit Anderson tries to rectify this and considers the implications of the crisis in an extended conclusion. However, this absence coupled with the rigor of the earlier analyses gives Anderson's discussion comparatively little weight in relation to the rest of the text.

The nuance of the analysis and the promise for a future politics comes through at the very end of the book. Anderson does not mince words. Europe's cultural, economic, intellectual and political decline has sent it adrift. Its place in world politics is, at the moment, aligned with a foreign policy agenda that is related to, if not in the immediate family of, the United States. For Anderson though not all is lost; decline holds a special place in Europe's intellectual history. *NOW* suggests perhaps as they have done in the past, the destructive forces of economic recession, political malaise, cultural atrophy and intellectual inertia, may "reignite the engines of political conflict and ideological division that gave the continent its impetus in the past" (547). The longstanding disequilibrium, the dialectic, of the Old World that past generations sought to conquer, to institutionalize or balance, and in so doing further propelled, have renewed Europe before. Thus, Europe's current languid state may be the forces of its very renewal. After all it is too much, Anderson reminds us, to settle on the "idea that time and contradiction have come to a halt" (547).

Anderson does persuasively demonstrate that social, economic, and political systems in EU states have weakened. However, as Anderson's analysis of Europe's intellectual history reveals, the meaning of decline has roots that extend beyond some form of empirical state. Rather, to borrow from Weber, decline is a 'demonic concept'; once summoned its powers extend far beyond the empirical conditions it is put in service of representing. Indeed, decline is a political imagination that serves to

superimpose 'THE' historical moment on the present, and historically its political currency does not fall evenly on left and right. Offering little to the left, discourses of decline were central to the ideologies of 'national rebirth' and 'new order' that shored up authoritarian regimes of the 1930s. Moreover, writing from the hundred-year anniversary of the start of WWI, it would be remiss not to add that if 'decline' revved the engines of political conflict that renewed Europe, these engines churned not only on ideas, but on blood and bone as well.