Controlled by the Corporate Narrative: Obama's Education Policy, the Shock Doctrine, and Mechanisms of Capitalist Power

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A nation that destroys its systems of education, degrades its public information, guts its public libraries and turns its airwaves into vehicles for cheap, mindless amusement becomes deaf, dumb and blind. It prizes test scores above critical thinking and literacy. It celebrates rote vocational training and the singular, amoral skill of making money. It churns out stunted human products, lacking the capacity and vocabulary to challenge the assumptions and structures of the corporate state. It funnels them into a caste system of drones and systems managers. It transforms a democratic state into a feudal system of corporate masters and serfs. (Hedges, 2011)

Introduction

In this article, I aim to illuminate how and why public schools have been sustained and/or strengthened as hierarchical, inequitable, and undemocratic sites that serve the corporate capitalist state. In doing so, I draw on three theoretical ideas: the *shock doctrine,* described vividly by Naomi Klein (2007); *critical multicultural education* (Lea, 2010); and the idea of *modern disciplinary technologies or mechanisms of power* (Foucault, 1995).

I begin by looking at the current, highly unequal, educational landscape in the United States, and some of the ways in which the corporate capitalist agenda has controlled the education policies of President Obama over the last two years. I then explore why most individuals, including members of the middle class and large numbers of poor and low-income people, have consented to a neo-liberal, "free-market," global capitalist order, in spite of the growing inequalities that it generates. Finally, I offer a few ideas to interrupt the current, neo-liberal, capitalist program.

The Current Educational Landscape in the US: President Obama's Capitalist Agenda

Naomi Klein has documented the ways in which, throughout history, people in positions of power have concocted political and economic crises, and/or taken advantage of "natural" crises, like Hurricane Katrina, to manipulate relatively powerless people into accepting policies and practices that are in the interest of elites and not the mass of the people. Hence, one third of the people displaced by Katrina, disproportionately poor and of color, have not been able to return to

their city, and New Orleans has become a more exclusive corporate playground that before the hurricane.

Diane Ravitch (2010a) wrote about the way in which this political shock tactic is being used to advance a neo-liberal, corporatist agenda in education:

> Every time some expert, public official, or advocate declares that our public schools are in crisis, stop, listen, and see what he or she is selling. In the history of American education, crisis talk is cheap. Those who talk crisis usually have a cure that they want to promote, and they prefer to keep us focused on the dimensions of the "crisis" without looking too closely at their proposed cure. The crisis talkers today want to diminish the role of local school boards and increase the privatization of public education. They recite the familiar statistics about mediocre student performance on international tests, and they conclude that bold action is needed and there is no time to delay or ponder. Local school boards insist on deliberation; they give parents and teachers a place to speak out and perhaps oppose whatever bold actions are on the table. So, in the eyes of some of our current crop of school reformers, local school boards are the problem that is blocking the reforms we need. The "reformers" want action, not deliberation.

President Obama's "risky bet" and his unwillingness to play a role in interrupting this neo-liberal agenda seem to be one and the same thing, and have been extremely frustrating for many of the so-called progressives who voted for him. They would like to see educational policies leading to, for example, schools in which students develop critical consciousness of the way hegemonic practices, like racism, classism and whiteness, continue to work in society to advantage the few on the backs of the many; schools in which subjects such as science and math are seen as tools that can be used to develop healthy, sustainable communities, driven by organic food and renewable energy.

Michael Apple (2011, February) graded Obama's first year and a half of educational policy as President in more nuanced terms than many who are outraged at Obama's support for many of the dysfunctional principles of No Child Left Behind, and his inability to enact all of his

campaign promises on education. According to Apple, Obama's agenda is a slight improvement over that of his predecessor, George W. Bush.

> Some things have changed. But much still remains the same. Obama's signature education initiative, the Race to the Top, includes some partly progressive elements and intuitions. For instance, schools will be given more credit for raising student achievement, even if a school's average scores do not meet the goals of adequate yearly progress. The culture of shaming schools has been lessened. There is no longer a hidden agenda of privatizing all of our major public institutions. These changes should not be dismissed.

However, Apple went on to write,

> But even with this more flexible approach, Race to the Top continues some of the same tendencies that made No Child Left Behind so deeply problematic. We still have corporate-style accountability procedures, the employment of divisive market mechanisms, the closing of schools, an uncritical approach to what counts as important curricular knowledge, the weakening of teachers' unions, and strong mayoral control of school systems. The policies advocated by Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan aren't as aggressive as before. They don't see schools as simply factories producing workers and profits. But overall, these policies still bear some of the hallmarks of the neoliberal agenda that has been pushed on schools for years…In Obama's plan, competition will still be sponsored. But rather than an emphasis on vouchers and privatization— the ultimate goal of many on the right during the Bush years—the focus is on charter schools. Choice will largely be limited to the public sector. This is clearly an improvement over the ways in which public institutions and public workers were vilified during the Bush years. However, the research on charter schools shows that their results are mixed at best. While some good charter schools flourish, charter schools as a whole have often fared worse than regular public schools. And they seem to be even more racially segregated than regular public schools.

(p. 26)

Charter schools are, indeed, technically public schools but the management of at approximately of them by for-profit companies has blurred the line between the public and the private in what counts as school.

> Contrary to the idea of charters as small, locally run schools, approximately a third of them now rely on management companies -- which can be either for-profit or non-profit -- to perform many of the most fundamental school services, such as hiring and firing staff, developing curricula and disciplining students. But while the shortcomings of traditional public schools have received much attention in recent years, a look at the private sector's efforts to run schools in Ohio, Florida and New York shows that turning things over to a company has created its own set of problems for public schools. Government data suggest that schools with for-profit managers have somewhat worse academic results than charters without management companies, and a number of boards have clashed with managers over a lack of transparency in how they are using public funds. (Coutts, 2011)

Apple's point that Obama's policy may be seen by some as a critique of the "distressing reality" of current schools and teachers by low-income parents whose children attend these schools, should not be dismissed. It is easy to see how poor people, disproportionately of color, would seek school choice when their children are forced to attend under-resourced schools, some of whose teachers, largely white, are under-qualified and hold low, deficit expectations of students. This perspective constitutes the crisis to which Davis Guggenheim's much advertised (2010) film, *Waiting for Superman,* responds, although Guggenheim's general, unfair vilification of regular public school teachers and teachers unions, and his blind promotion of charters are outrageous. In the words of Stan Karp (2010) from Rethinking Schools:

> The now-familiar buzzwords are charter schools, merit pay, choice, and accountability. But the larger goal, to borrow a phrase from the Democrats for

> Education Reform (DFER), a political lobby financed by hedge fund millionaires that is a chief architect of the campaign, is to "burst the dam" that has historically protected public education and its $600 billion annual expenditures from unchecked commercial exploitation and privatization.

Thus, President Obama's and his Secretary of Education, Arnie Duncan's promotion of those charter schools, driven by corporate interests, has an agenda other than meeting the needs of the children of poor parents, disproportionately of color.

To what extent is Obama playing in to the shock doctrine in order to promote what amounts to an undeniably corporatist agenda? Clearly education is important to President Obama, and he is rhetorically committed to greater academic achievement for underserved populations. However, in the face of powerful hegemonic forces, his agenda as it is being pursued will not create greater equity and social justice in school and society. Moreover, it is the *type* of "achievement" pursued under current education policy that troubles many—one that falls far short of critical multiculturalism. For example, in many low income schools, under threat of penalties from NCLB to meet their annual yearly progress as measured by high stakes tests, current policy dumbs down high order thinking, critical consciousness and creativity; it stunts student ability to look at the world from multiple perspectives and worldviews; and it prevents the commitment to facilitating student voice through genuine dialogue. While Obama's campaign rhetoric never indicated his intention, if elected President, to promote a critical multicultural educational program, even most of his modest promises are still "in the works" (PolitiFact.com, 2011). Moreover, as opposed to promoting the progressive policies listed above, Obama frequently expresses goals such as "winning the future." His vision for education is a corporate, capitalist one:

> If we want to win the global competition for new jobs and industries, we've got to win the global competition to educate our people. We've got to have the best trained, best skilled workforce in the world. That's how we'll ensure that the next Intel, the next Google, or the next Microsoft is created in America, and hires American workers. (Gardner, 2010)

In other words, Obama uses public rhetoric to frame his education policy as a common sense response to a crisis—the US's loss of global hegemony and the need for the U.S, to maintain its exceptionalism in the world. He frames his commitment to education not in terms of the welfare of the people but in terms of the welfare of the largest corporations and the overall capitalist political economy over which he presides. He does so even though that the divide between the rich and the poor in that economy is growing exponentially. Obama may believe that if he assuages the corporate economy he will benefit the citizens who most need his help but the opposite appears to be the case:

> A new study by the Center on Budget Policy Priorities, a non-partisan left-leaning think tank in Washington DC, shows that the income divide between the top one percent of Americans and everyone else has tripled in the last three decades leading up to the recession. The gap between the rich and poor hasn't been this large since 1928, better known as the year before the Great America…(According to) Mike Norman, the chief economist at John Thomas Financial…the gap between the rich and poor can only be altered to favor the middle class when policies are changed…Current policies channel wealth to the top one or two percent of the American population, creating an income disparity. Norman added, the wealth transfer to the rich has been larger under US President Barack Obama's policies than under former President George W. Bush. (RT, 2010)

Why People Consent to Hierarchy, Inequity, and Lack of Democracy: Modern Disciplinary Technologies/Mechanisms of Power

Signifiers like Obama's "winning the future" should not be taken at face value, particularly in this context. Modern social systems have been carefully structured and imbued with *technologies* or *mechanisms of power* to effect the greatest compliance possible from citizens to the projects of powerful elites. Discourse as both language and practice is part of this arsenal. Colonizing the definitions of popular signifiers and disseminating new definitions through the corporate media is one way of appropriating meaning and gaining the consent and compliance of citizens. Indeed, the Obama election campaign was brilliant at carrying out this

process, leading to the belief by more than half of the voting electorate that his administration would deviate from the Bush model in socio-economic and military policy—and in education.

However, as shown above, that the Obama administration is also a neo-liberal, corporate government, if somewhat less toxic. However, in this supposedly kinder version of the neo-liberal agenda, *student achievement* is still defined in terms of readiness to meet the demands of the neo-liberal corporate economy.

The United States neo-liberal, corporate, capitalist state requires inequality in order for corporations to make obscene profits. Race and class operate, along with other modern mechanisms of power, to facilitate this process, which includes socializing, controlling, and maintaining citizens as consenting members of the hierarchical society (McLaren, 2005). In his later work, Michel Foucault looked at how

> since the sixteenth century, a new political form of power has been continuously developing...the state...(T)he state's power (and that's one of the reasons for its strength) is both individualizing and a totalizing form of power. Never, I think, in the history of human societies...has there been such a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques, and of totalization procedures. (Foucault, in Rabinow, 1984, p.14).

It was the relationship of the state to the individual that interested Foucault, and that concerns me in my work with teachers. It is my argument that most of us who fill the role of teachers in public schools today are important front-line agents in the reproduction of the corporate-military capitalist state. Modern disciplinary mechanisms of power are embedded in the structures of school, and we submit our students to these structures early in their school lives. This process, usually experienced less than consciously, works on teachers' as well as students' minds and bodies so they consent to the existing socio-economic system. These subtle and all but invisible mechanisms of power have been institutionalized, allowing elites to gain the consent of populations to their agenda much more efficiently that in previous generations, especially once they have been rendered vulnerable by a shock or crisis. Unless we are learn how to interrogate what it means to uphold the disciplinary technologies of the state, and the modalities by which

we are made teachers, we shall not realize the goal of a socially just state and egalitarian society to which so many of us ideally aspire.

In what follows I give some more examples of how modern disciplinary mechanisms of power play out in the field or education to gain the consent of educators to the unequal status quo. Once convinced that there is no other choice to assuage the crisis, most people agree to top down educational policies, and over time they become normal and common sense. This is happening in both the United States and the United Kingdom, since power should be seen as a global phenomenon.

Table 1: Examples of Modern Disciplinary Technologies/Mechanisms of Power

MODERN DISCIPLINARY TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER (cf. Foucault)	**EXAMPLE**
1. Normalizing and Dividing Discourses: *Coopting/colonizing and legitimizing the hegemonic agenda*	Language: Appropriating signifiers; Constructing and reproducing *deficit* discourses in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, ableism, age that advantage elites and disadvantage the many.
2. Classification: *Sorting function*	"Race," class, gender categorization—via tracking, ability grouping and curricula content; Course placements in terms of Language Arts, Science etc. AP, Honors, Special Needs; ESL/Bilingual education; Pedagogical strategies; High stakes testing, grades.
3. Surveillance: *Monitoring, constructing and regulating subjectivities; both maintains privilege and usurps power*	Students have no privacy, even in the bathrooms; School building structures facilitate surveillance; Dress codes, codes of conduct strictly enforced.

4. Standardization: *Through standards, homogenous, scripted, Anglocentric curriculum*	Establishes power relations; Acceptable school curricula, pedagogy and practice are established through comparison with the "normal"/whiteness; High stakes tests
5. Exclusion: *Often occurs with normalization*	Tracking; Reading groups; "Sheltered" & English-only classrooms of "English Language Learners (ELLs)" and Special Education students; Some identities, practices and ways of constructing knowledge
6. Distribution: *Controlling the agenda*	Reading groups; Grade level groups, segregated schools and classrooms
7. Individualization: *A form of exclusion*	Competition,' me' versus 'we', I, rather than viewing the historical, systemic nature of inequalities and inequities
8. Totalization: *Consumes the student agenda & governs and regulates groups*	Students commit to various competitive, ego-invested groups like year groups, teachers, fraternities, teams, debating groups, ethnic groups
9. Regulation: *Erects the limits of acceptable behavior to control and maintain the existing system*	Refers to group rules, regulations and sometimes reference to knowledge; related to sanctions, rewards and punishment (NCLB)

Race and Class as Mechanisms of Power

Inequalities in the United States based on race and class have not dissipated. In 2007, the top 1 % of Americans controlled 34.6% of America's net worth; the next 9% controlled 38.5% of America's net worth. Thus the richest 10% of Americans controlled 73.1% two thirds of America's net worth, and the bottom 90% controlled 26.9%. As Dave Gilson and Carolyn Perot noted in Mother Jones (2011):

We have known for many years than this inequality plays out in education (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Kohl, 2009; Ravitch, 2010b), and is not being addressed by Obama's rush to create more charter schools. In their book, The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2010) write that:

> in an international analysis published in Lancet, and an analysis of the 50 US states published in Social Science and Medicine, we have shown that scores in maths and reading are related to inequality. In addition, the percentage of children dropping out of high school in each of the 50 states of the USA is…also linked to inequality.

Race relates to these class disparities, as there are disproportionately more people of color who live in poverty. While the overall graduation rate in the United States in 2008 was 68%—a figure which represented little change in recent years—more than 75% of White and Asian students graduated, however the graduation rates of Black, American Indian, and Hispanic were 50%, 51% and 53% respectively. While there were regional disparities (from highest to lowest: Midwest, Northwest, West, South), graduation rates were lower for students in highly segregated, low-income, urban centers (NCES, *Cumulative Promotion Index, 2008).*

How Mechanisms of Power Play Out in Two High Schools

Race and class are important dimensions of educational equality but the process by which public education is sustained and/or strengthened as an hierarchical, inequitable, and undemocratic, neo-liberal process, and why individuals who teach, study and administrate in this field consent to this reality, is very complex. In my comparative, qualitative, narrative research over the last 18 years, I have sought to better understand this process, and contribute to a growing body of knowledge. Through case studies—interviews of teachers and observations of their practice in classrooms and institutionalized school structures in the United States and in England—I have sought to contribute to our knowledge of how school functions as the setting in which disciplinary technologies of power (see Table 1) shape our subjectivities, the categories of knowledge we draw on to make sense of the world, the relationships that give meaning to our lives, and what we consider legitimate objects of difference.

In the following, I focus on the disciplinary mechanisms of surveillance and standardization in relation to research I recently carried out: Case studies of two high schools, one in California and one in England.

Surveillance

In efforts to maintain the public educational process as a supply depot for human capital, agents of the state engage in surveillance. Herb Kohl wrote recently in an article titled *The Educational Panopticon (*2009) that:

> the notion of control and surveillance is pervasive these days. I believe that the consequence of scripted curriculum, teacher accountability, continuous monitoring of student performance, high stakes testing, and punishment for not reaching external standards is that schools become educational panopticons, that is, total control and surveillance communities dedicated to undermining the imagination, creativity, intelligence, and autonomy of students and teachers.

The panopticon was the name Jeremy Bentham gave to the prison he designed in the 1780s to ensure complete surveillance or prisoners at all time. Built around a central well or viewing area, inmates would be observable at all times when not locked in their cells. In recent research I undertook in the United Kingdom, I found that the New Labour Government under Tony Blair, had engaged in an extensive program of school building and renewal.

> After decades of neglect and dilapidation, a school building and renewal programme increased by sevenfold; making possible a systematic renovation and rebuilding of our entire secondary school estate nationwide over 10 to 15 years under the Building Schools for the Future programme. (Blair, 2004)

However, less happily in terms of the neo-liberal project of privatization, totalization and control, I found that the government had neo-liberally farmed out the building construction of schools to private firms. The high school, in which I used to teach, had been rebuilt by a Dutch corporation, and the conflicts of interest, tensions, and contradictions existing between the for-profit goals of the corporation and the educational goals of many of the staff were palpable in terms of voiced concerns an complaints. In addition, the model chosen for rebuilding was the panopticon. Ideally suited to monitoring and regulating the behavior of students, it looked and

felt like a prison. Some of the staff I spoke to were proud of the new facility, while others felt it had ushered in George Orwell's 1984 in a concrete way.

Surveillance in the California school was less sophisticated. Guards had been hired to keep the community off campus although recent violence was a testimony to its lack of success. Additionally, attempts to mould students into a one-size-fits-all model of the acceptable citizen in the given economic system were being undertaken through the scripted curriculum, teacher accountability, continuous monitoring of student performance, high stakes testing, and punishment for not reaching external standards that Kohl (2009) mentions above.

Standardization

In England, all high school aged students were obliged to sit and pass state-mandated, "keystone" tests at age 13, in addition to GCSE exams at 16; in California, students were obliged to take and pass the multiple choice California Standards Tests in English-language arts, math, science, and history-social science. These scores were used to calculate the school's Academic Performance Index (API), and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which in turn were used to rank the school and administer penalties.

In the working class English school, located in an urban center close to London's Gatwick airport, high stakes tests drove the content of courses. However, the teachers I spoke with tended to see themselves as enlightened in comparison with other schools in the school district. Most of the humanities teachers I interviewed saw their school as much more culturally sensitive and conducive to high order thinking that these other schools. At the same time, several acknowledged the lack of racial and cultural sensitivity expressed by a majority of faculty outside of their department, as well as many of the white students at the school. The majority of the student population was of white British origin, but a significant minority of students came from Pakistani, Indian, West Indian, and other more recent immigrant backgrounds. While multiculturalism was not a central philosophy in the National Curriculum, these teachers who volunteered to participate in my interviews were clearly concerned about the experiences of these recent Mauritian and Eastern European immigrants.

However, concern and critical dialogue about racism and xenophobia are not the same thing. There was evidence that the teachers in the school felt it was unsafe to discuss in class the controversial issues that many of their students experienced on an on-going basis. Yet, they were

supposed to lead a critical dialogue about personal, social and cultural issues of concern to their students in a course titled Personal and Social Education (PSE). Many did not feel prepared for such a critical dialogue.

Four of the humanities teachers mentioned the *Persecution and Prejudice Curriculum,* mandated by the national curriculum, to be taught in the equivalent of the 9th grade. Two of these teachers indicated that this curriculum was a clear, anti-racist platform; on the other hand, two told me the subjects covered were unrelated to Britain's colonial and racist history, and that teachers were encouraged to avoid discussing racism in local contexts that might create conflict in the classroom. Three Muslim female students confirmed this information in informal conversation, saying they did not get to discuss meaningful controversial issues in the classroom—issues related to their religion or the British colonial past. In fact, I observed a *Think Tank* humanities class, designed to encourage students to talk about moral issues, in which the teacher actually guided students away from discussion about Islam to the top down subject of the National Curriculum for the day—euthanasia. Two of the teachers felt comfortable telling me that the majority of faculty at the campus believed the campus should focus on white, Christian-derived (not religious) beliefs. Indeed, it became clear that for some of the teachers, if a subject was not on the National Curriculum, it was not on the class agenda.

Three of the teachers brought up the discomfort that many teachers felt as a result of the large numbers of recent immigrant Mauritian students on campus. They felt that this growth in the immigrant population had been a barrier to addressing the cultural divisions on campus. In sum, although at least two of the teachers said they took risks and clearly tried to engage in dialogue with their students when controversial issues were brought up, and three teachers did tell me they would like to see more two-way multicultural education, which they defined as affirming immigrant students' cultures and engaging them in discussion while introducing them to the host country's culture, critical multiculturalism did not guide the pedagogy or curriculum in most of the classrooms.

In the California school, there was no equivalent of the *Persecution and Prejudice Curriculum;* no curriculum that focused on racism even outside of the United States. I observed a History class studying the migration of African Americans from the rural south to the urban north in the United States, in the early part of the twentieth century. When the teacher asked the whole class why African Americans had decided to take this journey, one Black female student

replied, "to escape racism." She was silenced when the teacher responded that they were not talking about racism, and would talk about this matter later, as if the student 's analysis was wrong and the migration north had no association with racism. In informal conversation with the student, I learned that the class does not get to discuss controversial issues often or freely.

In the classes I observed in the California school, the fear on the part of teachers of moving outside of safe narratives was very real. There was very little critical dialogue. Some of the white male teachers acknowledged that while they recognized the diversity within groups at the school, they didn't always understand (issues of race). One of them acknowledged, "I have entitlement."

At the same time, I heard teachers express stereotypical deficit descriptions of students. Filipino students, who disproportionately made up Advanced Placement (AP) courses, were represented as the "model majority"; African American students, who disproportionately constituted "honors" courses (lower tracks) were described as "not hyped by the history of Africa." I was told, without critical analysis, that the latter was the result of poverty.

In the California school, there was less emphasis than in England on critiquing the national/state agenda, although not one of the teachers I spoke with told me that high stakes testing made the school work better, including the principal. The teachers of color expressed the importance of working with poor students to strengthen families and connect students academically. The one African American teacher mentioned above advocated for the introduction of more culturally relevant literary texts, like *Native Son,* that moved away from the Eurocentric cannon, although, as also mentioned, such books were on the district list of approved books.

In sum, in both schools, disciplinary technologies of power were related to systems of hyper-accountability, which refers to the accountability measures mandated by recent government legislation: the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind in the United states, and Every Child Matters in the United Kingdom (Mansell, 2007). Curricula and pedagogy, and processes of tracking, testing were supported by sorting, surveillance, classifying, excluding, regulating, individualizing, and normalizing practices in both of the schools. Disaffected teachers were at a loss to know how to interrupt the onward march of power.

Interrupting the Onward March of Power: Ideas for Helping Pre-service Teachers See Through the Hegemonic Processes

The above thesis has suggested that, in spite of the possibility for human agency in response to shock scenarios like Katrina, we should "not deny that (we) are often duped by culture" (Grossberg, 1994, p.6) – the discourses, narratives, scripts, ideas, beliefs, myths, commercial advertisements, media messages, *school curricula*, categories of knowledge, types of relationships, and other cultural forms and content with which we engage and interpret the world in which we live. In addition, an institutionalized system of disciplinary technologies of power, including curriculum and pedagogy that promote racist classist and sexist discourses, have a profound influence on the decisions people make in response to shock scenarios. Guided by narratives emanating from people and organizations in power, middle class as well as poor people often accept socio-economic, political and educational systems that are not in their long terms interests. Discourses of power shape our sense of who we are, what knowledge is important, what relationships have value, and what we should objectify in the world. Many of us come to see the hegemonic, neo-liberal narrative that promotes privatization, consumerism, and individualism, as common sense, normal and natural, and we identify with its tenets. After two and a half years in office, it is becoming clear that President Obama, while rhetorically concerned about the plight of the dispossessed, has also embraced this cultural script, at least in part.

This hegemonic process (Gramcsi, 1971) must be consented to daily or it would breakdown. Each day on awakening, most of us tacitly renew our agreement with the socio-economic, political and cultural systems in which we live. Granted, we grumble, we may even sign a pew petitions on line against British Petroleum's recent, egregious, environmentally toxic practices in the Gulf, but we rarely do more to interrupt the relentless functioning of institutions.

On the other hand, most of us would claim an investment in "social justice" and "equal educational opportunity." Even if we don't take to the streets to express our fury concerning the ways in which the global, transnational, neo-liberal economic system in which we teach and learn serves the interests of the few and has stolen the voices of the many, there are many actions that we could take inside of our classrooms to interrupt the disciplinary technologies of power, including the surveillance to which we are subjected, and the standardization of a hegemonic scripted curriculum – whether the script lies in ourselves or in the corporate produced material

resources with which we are supposed to educate our students. There is a growing collection of materials available for this latter purpose, including the following: Rethinking Schools (www.rethinkingschools.org; Teaching for Change (www.teachingforchange.com); Ed. Change/Multicultural Pavilion (www.edchange.com); and Oyate (www.oyate.org).

The critical multicultural teacher associates a dynamic, activist conception of culture, identity and lived experience with her/his professional practice. S/he consistently attempts to link the details of everyday school practice to the wider social structure, communities and social relations in which students and their families live, work and play. The critical multicultural teacher embraces the theoretical viewpoint that radical change in social structures is possible because human beings have historically demonstrated "agency," and "a praxis of possibility." S/he facilitates a classroom that allows for the possibility of alternative and hybrid ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and acting in the world. Critical multiculturalism is an answer to the question: "We may oppose practices that reproduce dominant discourse but what do we put in its place?" Critical multicultural teachers and students look for solutions to local and global inequities and injustices.

Below I suggest two ways in which the onward march of disciplinary power may be interrupted by the application of critical multiculturalism. The first is to use the model *modern disciplinary technologies of power* (Table 1) to better identify the ways in which neoliberal hegemony is playing out on one's campuses. I am currently inviting colleagues to join me in gathering this data in an effort to build a more coherent picture of hegemony at work in our schools and universities. The results of this research will be posted to a Wikisite: *Connect and Act for Educational Justice*. If the reader would like to join this effort, please send the results of your research to leav@uwstout.edu.

Secondly, the more we are able to give voice to students and communities that have been disempowered by disciplinary technologies of power the better. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is not new but remains a valuable approach to empowering ethnically and economically diverse voices through problem-posing projects that generate themes of critical concern to students and their communities, and support them in using the WORD (literacy and other academic skills) to resolve these real life (WORLD) problems (Freire, 1993/1970). This type of collaborative project between the university/college/school/ and community affirms the 'funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992) embedded in communities, whose

narratives have been traditionally been silenced in schools, and/or given less value than Eurocentric definitions of reality in defining socio-economic institutions.

Conclusion

It seems likely that in the pursuit of his socio-economic and political goals, President Obama's educational agenda will not radically deviate from the historical hegemonic trajectory that the educational system has taken in the United States. In this agenda, students are seen largely as human capital (Spring, 2008), and the educational system is viewed as the venue in which this capital should be developed to support the corporate, capitalist economy. At the same time, there are an enormous number of counter-hegemonic projects that are being enacted to interrupt the onward march of hegemony and its disciplinary technologies of power. It is important is that those of us who strongly object to the current neo-liberal project continue to develop effective ways of working together in resistance.

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