

Introduction

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WHAT IS NEOLIBERALISM?

Although often used interchangeably with the term *globalization* and regarded as an economic theory, neoliberalism is a complex of values, ideologies, and practices that affect the economic, political, and cultural aspects of society. Martinez and Garcia (2000) define neoliberalism as:

a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. Although the word is rarely heard in the United States, you can clearly see the effects of neo-liberalism here as the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. . . . Around the world, neo-liberalism has been imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-

American Development Bank . . . the capitalist crisis over the last 25 years, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That's what makes it 'neo' or new.

Thus, *neoliberalism* is another term for global market liberalism and for free-trade policies.

Liberalism can refer to a range of ideas (e.g., political, economic, religious). In the United States, political liberalism is generally presented as a "progressive" (left-wing) ideology marked by broadmindedness or tolerance for diverse social practices, concern for civic liberties and social welfare and it is contrasted with "conservative" (right-wing) politics. It is important to understand that political conservatives and liberals (in mainstream U.S. politics) both support economic (neo)liberalism.

Neoliberalism is the prevailing political economic paradigm in the world today and has been described as an ideological "monoculture," in that when neoliberal policies are criticized a common response is that "there is no alternative" (aka TINA). Although the term *neoliberalism* is largely unused by the public in the United States, it references something everyone is familiar with—policies and processes "whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit" (McChesney, 1998, p. 7). Neoliberalism is embraced by parties across the political spectrum, from right to left, in that the interests of wealthy investors and large corporations define social and economic policy. The free market, private enterprise, consumer choice, entrepreneurial initiative, deleterious effects of government regulation, and so on, are the tenets of a neoliberalism. Indeed, the corporate-controlled media spin would have the public believe that the economic consequences of neoliberal economic policy, which serves the interests of the wealthy elite, is good for everyone.

In fact, neoliberal economic policies have created massive social and economic inequalities among individuals and nations. For example, the same combination of growing personal debt and widening wealth gap that preceded the Great Depression underlies today's economy and is fueled by declines in wages, savings rates, and the number of workers covered by private pension plans. Presently, the top 1% of households in the United States own 40% of the nation's wealth (Collins, 1999). The wealth gap is particularly large for African Americans and Latinos. Despite a "strong economy" the number of Americans who do not have health insurance increased from 1998 to 1999 by nearly 1 million to 44.3 million (Pear, 1999). The United States has the highest level of child poverty in the industrial world (Chomsky, 1999).

On the global scene, neoliberal economic policies have reproduced these inequalities among nations. These policies, created by the U.S. government

and international financial institutions, have decimated the economies of countries like Brazil and Mexico, whereas local elites and transnational corporations reap huge profits (Petras & Veltmeyer, 1999).

Neoliberalism also works as a political system, one in which there is formal democracy, but the citizens remain spectators, diverted from any meaningful participation in decision making. McChesney (1998) describe neoliberal democracy in a nutshell: “trivial debate over minor issues by parties that basically pursue the same pro-business policies regardless of formal differences and campaign debate. Democracy is permissible as long as the control of business is off-limits to popular deliberation or change, i.e., so long as it isn’t democracy” (p. 9). A depoliticized and apathetic citizenry, such as in the United States, today, is a key outcome of neoliberalism; one that is arguably abetted by new education “reforms.”

Martinez and Garcia (2000) describe the main points of neoliberalism as follows:

1. *The rule of the market.* Liberating free/private enterprise from any restrictions imposed by the state (government) no matter the social damage that results. The aim is total freedom of movement for capital, goods, and services, which is facilitated by trade agreements such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).
2. *Cutting public expenditures for social services* (such as education and health care).
3. *Deregulation.* Reduction of government regulation that might diminish profits, including regulations that are intended to enhance on-the-job safety or protect the environment.
4. *Privatization.* Selling state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors (including public education services). Although usually done in the name of increased efficiency, privatization has mainly had the effect of concentrating wealth in fewer hands and making the public pay more for its needs.
5. *Elimination of the concept of “the public good” or “community”* and replacing it with “individual responsibility” and pressuring the poorest people to find solutions to their lack of education, health care, etc.

Neoliberalism is not new. It is merely the current version of the wealthy few’s attempt to restrict the rights and powers of the many. Although democracy and capitalism are popularly understood (and often taught) as birds of a feather, the conflict between protecting private wealth and creating a democratic society is conspicuous throughout U.S. history (see Ross, 2006).

NEOLIBERALISM AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Public education is under attack in North America and across the globe as a result of neoliberal government policies.¹ Education is a key target of the neoliberal project because of market size (e.g., global spending on education is more than \$1 trillion²), education's centrality to the economy, and its "potential to challenge corporate globalization if education succeeds in producing critical citizens for a democratic society" (Kuehn, 1999).

Governments have introduced curricular reforms, via legislation such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in the United States (which is extensively discussed in this volume), which commodify public education by reducing learning to bits of information and skill to be taught and tested and marketize education through programs that promote privatization and user fees in place of free, public education.

Neoliberal educational reforms (aimed at K–12 schools and universities) emphasize opening up the educational services market to for-profit educational management organizations (such as Edison Schools) and via international trade and investment agreements such as GATS (see Rikowski, Chapter 6, this volume), which in turn affects the scope of collect agreements (e.g., establishing working conditions, rates of pay, teacher autonomy, etc.).

Relatedly, efforts are made to reduce educational costs, often through economies of scale. Closing school libraries, reducing the number of special needs teachers, increasing class size, expanding online learning programs are examples. These actions intensify the work of teachers and isolate them from decision making and from one another.

Third, neoliberal educational reform policies focus on creation of curriculum standards (where the state defines the knowledge to be taught) and "accountability." The specification of curriculum standards is nearly always accompanied by accountability strategies. As Mathison (2004) pointed out, it does no good to establish expectations if one does not ensure they are met and, if they are not met that there is a planned remedy. The dominant approach to educational accountability is an "outcomes-based bureaucratic" one (i.e., most often mandated testing).

Whether the stakes are high or low and whether the locus of control is local, state, or national, this strategy is one where a distant authority sets

¹For an extensive examination of this attack on public schools in the United States as well as discussion of responses to defend public education in the public interests see Ross, Gabbard, Kesson, Mathison, and Vinson (2004).

²Kuehn (1999) points out that this figure represents costs of more than 50 million teachers, 1 billion students, and hundreds of thousands of educational establishments across the globe.

performance goals for students, schools, or school systems; holds individuals and units directly accountable for meeting the goals; and consequences are applied, including rewards for meeting performance goals and sanctions for not meeting them. (Mathison, 2004, pp. 13–14)

Neoliberalism and Education Reform in British Columbia: A Brief Example

The economy in British Columbia (B.C.) is booming and the provincial government enjoys a surplus. The benefits of this strong economy, however, are not finding their way into public schools. In fact, private interests, as a result of the provincial government policies, are trumping public interests.

The Liberal Party of B.C. has sold off public assets such as the provincial railroad and ferry networks and drastically cut funding for public education. What follows is a brief look at the economic situation in the B.C. and the incongruous treatment of public school financing.

- In December 2004 there were 17,000 new jobs and overall employment for the year rose by 2%. As a result, the jobless rate in the province hit 6.1%, its lowest level in 24 years.
- B.C. leads all of Canada in the increase of housing starts for 2004, up 32%. In Vancouver, the housing market saw double-digit appreciation across the board in the fourth quarter of 2004. Home sales in B.C. generated \$9.4 billion in economic activity since 2001 (all figures are in Canadian dollars).
- The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently released a survey that shows B.C. business owners are among the most optimistic in Canada. Nearly one third of businesses expected to add jobs in 2005 and only 9% expected reductions.
- The provincial government has forecast a \$1.2 billion surplus due to higher natural resources royalties and income from Crown corporations. Provincial debt is expected to decline by more than \$600 million.
- The Liberal government in Victoria, the provincial capital, touts the fact that no corner of the province has been immune from this economic boom.

One would think that under these economic conditions public schools would be expanding services and resources to all students. Instead, this same government—led by Premier Gordon Campbell—has produced a series of budgets that are devastating schools and making education less accessible. Canada's spending on public education lags behind the average developing nation's spending (\$7,480 per student) according to the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development and B.C. spends 13% less than that (\$6,529 per student).

Under the current government, real per student education funding has plunged since 2000. Cuts in the provincial education budget have produced 92 school closings since 2002, displacing more than 14,000 students. And 2,881 teaching positions have been cut, even though enrollment is 12% higher now than it was in the mid-1990s.

The number of school librarians in the province fell from 939 to 706 since 2000. A study by the B.C. Teacher Librarians shows money available for library materials declined by 12% over the same period.

According to Statistics Canada, the student-educator ratio for B.C. rose nearly 5% from 2001 to 2003. Although most other provinces were experiencing a decrease in student-educator ratios, B.C. saw the largest increase in the nation. Tom Christensen, B.C.'s Liberal minister of education, argued for the importance of flexibility in labor contracts over the impact of large class size on student learning and safety in B.C. schools. Christensen claimed that "students in B.C. are better off since class limits were removed from teacher union contracts" (Ross, 2005, ¶12).

The B.C. government has refused to fund treatment for children with autism. In July 2000, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the treatment intervention known as Lovaas (or applied behavioral analysis) was a medically necessary service and must be funded by the government. That court concluded that the failure to fund this treatment constitutes direct government discrimination against children with autism spectrum disorder and is a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The provincial government appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada and in November 2004 the lower court rulings were overturned. CBC News reported that B.C. Attorney General Geoff Plante "hailed the judgment, while extending his sympathy to parents with autistic children."

In his election campaign Campbell promised a 5% reduction in higher education tuition, but instead delivered steep increases. Since 2002, tuition fees have increased by more than 80% at B.C. universities and by 100% at B.C. colleges. If tuition had risen by the rate of inflation since 1995, the average university student would be paying \$2,907, rather than the current \$4,735. (It is even worse for international students, who are paying up to five times as much as Canadian students. One recent report described international students at the University of British Columbia who were having to work illegal jobs and sift garbage for food to make ends meet.)

At the same time, provincial government funding per full-time postsecondary student fell by 9%. Government support for postsecondary education in the province is at its lowest level in B.C. since the 1950s.

The cuts to public education funding in a time of plenty are much more than an absurdity. As in the United States and United Kingdom, which are

examined in depth in the chapters that follow, the current situation in B.C. is a reflection of neoliberalism—the policies and processes that permit a handful of private interests to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. The Vancouver based Fraser Institute is leading the charge in the war on public schools in Canada and has close ties to the U.S. Business Roundtable, Manhattan Institute, Olin and Thomas B. Fordham Foundations, all of which are players in the assaults on public schools in the United States. The free market, private enterprise, consumer choice, entrepreneurial initiative, and government deregulation are fundamental principles driving the attack on public education across North America.

Neoliberal educational reform policies, such as the ones enacted in B.C., reflect a number of the key features of capitalism in its stage of “globalization,” which Bertell Ollman (2001) described as “capitalism with the gloves off and on a world scale” (p. 9).

Taken together, these developments, which are all internally related constitute a new stage in capitalism. It is a serious error to think that they have brought us beyond capitalism. If anything, with these changes, our society is more thoroughly capitalist than ever before. After all, more and more of the world is privately owned, more and more wealth is devoted to maximizing profits rather than serving needs (and only serving needs in so far as they maximize profits), more and more people sell their labor power in order to live, more and more objects (ideational as well as material) carry price tags and can be bought in the market, and money and those who have a lot of it have more power and status than ever before. This is capitalism, capitalism with a vengeance, and that’s globalization. Which means, too, that the problems associated with globalization cannot be solved—as so many liberals would like to do—without dealing with their roots in the capitalist system. (p. 93–94)

Ollman set the stage for the chapters that follow, which aim to both analyze the current state of education reform, but also begin developing solutions to the problems faced by public education that have their roots in the capitalist system.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

In recent years, critical educational theory has been largely ignored in North America as postmodernism dominated high-theory discussions among academics and market-based approaches to education ruled educational practices. However, as the *Times Literary Supplement* recently opined “classical

Marxist critique of capitalism remains as valid as ever . . . a fact . . . evident for those willing to look. . . . [T]he *Communist Manifesto* now reads as if it was written just a few weeks ago." Contributors to this book argue that Marx's dialectical and materialist analyses remain the sharpest tool for critical educators seeking to teach and organize for social justice.

Many scholars believe the pinnacle of marxian educational theory in the West was reached in the mid-1970s, with the publication of Bowles and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America* and Paul Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour*. Despite utilizing Marx's concepts, it has been argued that both books have tenuous links to Marx and Marxism (e.g., Sarup, 1978). For example, Sarup criticized Bowles and Gintis for their crude application of the base/superstructure model and argued that the study's methodology had more in common with functionalism and positivism than with Marxism. Rikowski (1997) argued that marxian educational theory in the late-1970s took a reactive trajectory that included futile attempts to either synthesize or salvage something from the marxian educational theory of the mid-1970s or, ignoring the problems these studies posed, merely applied Bowles and Gintis' "correspondence principle" to developing educational issues.

This book undertakes two primary projects: (a) a critique of educational reforms that result from the rise of neoliberalism; and (b) providing marxian alternatives to neoliberal conceptions of education problems and solutions and thus advancing marxian educational theory (and practice) by utilizing Marx's own works in the examination of education as it is theorized and practiced today. This is not an altogether new approach (e.g., Sharp, 1986), however, it has great significance for the field of education in the contradictory contexts of, on one hand, the contemporary belief in the "triumph" of capitalism and the market and, on the other hand, the escalating social divisions and extreme economic and social injustices of global capitalist society. Education is an integral aspect of social (and individual) transformation (processes that are themselves inseparable). As Allman (1999) argues, an understanding of how human consciousness is constituted and how it can be made critical of existing social arrangements as well as the role that education can play in these processes are crucial because "these understandings are the necessary bases for transforming the educational relations and developing forms of engagement that can lead to and eventually bring about justice for all humankind" (p. 2).

Marx's vision of socialism emerges from his study of capitalism—socialism is the unrealized potential inherent in capitalism itself (Ollman, 1971). Chapter authors draw on the main theories of Marx's work—his theory of alienation, the labor theory of value and the materialist conception of history—in examination of contemporary educational thought and practice. Particular attention is given to the following: (a) the commodification of literacy; (b) alienation and the demands of high-stakes standardized tests, (c)

the relationship of school work and the creation of value (and surplus value), (d) schooling and the partisan state; (d) segregation as seen through the windows of race and class, (e) the reciprocal relationship of curriculum and instruction in insurgent pedagogy, and (f) the centrality of schools for social change.

Our aim is to rethink the theoretical grounds of radical educational practice aimed at social transformation while at the same time building a vision of social transformation that is firmly grounded in the material life of capitalist society. Forging a clear understanding of what is wrong with capitalist society (and schools) and what needs to be changed is not enough, because this understanding alone does not lead to social transformation. Therefore, a key issue addressed by contributors is how forms of critical consciousness adequate to the task of terminating the destructive social relations of capitalist society can be engendered throughout society via schools. This means paying attention to the practical aspects of pedagogy for social transformation and organizing to achieve a more just society. Each contributor offers critical examinations of the pragmatics of pedagogy and organizing for social transformation.

The Chapters

Neoliberalism and Educational Reform opens with three chapters that provide broad overviews of the how neoliberal educational policies work in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Chapter 1, by David Hursh, describes how, over the last two decades, neoliberal policies have transformed educational systems around the globe, with public schools being replaced with private, for-profit, competitive, market-based schools that increase inequality and undermine democracy. He describes how in the United States, state and federal governments now require that students and schools be evaluated through statewide standardized exams. In some states, students must pass the exams in order to be promoted from one grade to another or from high school. Under the federal NCLB Act, schools failing to make adequate progress must fund tutoring for their students, often through private for-profit organizations. Furthermore, failing schools face the prospect of being administered by or turned over as a charter school to a private corporation. The Bush administration strongly supports the privatization of education through voucher programs and charter schools. Hursh also describes how in England, schools are competing with one another for students, test scores, and funding. There is compelling evidence regarding the harmful affect competition has on the culture of the school, including teacher professionalism and student success. Hursh argues that these reforms are not, contrary to their proponents' claims, improving

education for all. Rather, the gap between schools is widening. He describes how comprehensive schools in England and the United States are in decline, creating a hierarchy of schools in both countries. Because of the requirement of raising test scores, teachers have less flexibility in creating curriculum that responds to the need of the students in their class.

The NCLB Act is the focus of the Pauline Lipman's chapter. She argues that NCLB further integrates education into a global and national neoliberal agenda and intensifies the war on youth of color. NCLB is rooted in global competition over markets and investments and by cultural struggles over race, ethnicity, language, and national identity. By framing education in the language of accountability and choice, NCLB further consolidates—materially and ideologically—corporate control of education for profit. NCLB policies and the discourse surrounding them become a “discourse policy” directed to society as a whole, defining educational problems and their solutions so as to limit the possibilities we have of thinking and acting otherwise. Lipman calls for an alternative discourse rooted in social justice to speak to the real urgency to address the profound inequalities and miseducation that define public schools. She concludes that despite their profound failures, free public schools need to be fought for as a democratic public space *and* fought over ideologically.

In Chapter 3, Kevin D. Vinson and E. Wayne Ross argue that education today must be understood according to a setting in which spectacle and surveillance come together, a state of affairs in which discipline is established and maintained as individuals and groups are monitored simultaneously by both larger and smaller entities. They make use of standards-based educational reform (SBER) within the NCLB Act of 2001 as an indicative “case” (especially vis-à-vis the conditions of curriculum standards and mandated high-stakes testing), one in which this form of disciplinary power relates dynamically with and to what we (can) know and how we (can) know it. Their chapter demonstrates that with respect to contemporary education, disciplinary power (i.e., “disciplinarity”) must be understood within a context defined in part according to the *convergence* of surveillance and spectacle (as opposed, that is, to either one or the other separately). Vinson and Ross use NCLB to illustrate (a) the mechanisms by which such a confluence of power elements occurs; (b) the contexts within which such a state of affairs is made possible; (c) the extent to which this conceptualization might provide insights into accepted and prevailing pedagogical practices, viewpoints, and policies; (d) the potential practical consequences (i.e., those of surveillance, spectacle, *and* “surveillance-spectacle”) of this disciplinary setting; and (e) the increased complexity and turbulence made necessary by this convergence of surveillance and spectacle in terms of the production, establishment, evolution, and maintenance of any effective mode (or modes) of critique and/or resistance.

In Chapter 4, Gilbert G. Gonzalez examines the history of U. S. imperialism and the education of Mexican immigrants in the 20th century. This chapter argues that the United States is an imperialist power and that U.S.–Mexico relations since the late 19th century falls squarely into the definition of imperialism. Furthermore, this relationship has significantly impacted the history of the Mexican immigrant community. Gonzalez's analysis differs fundamentally from the general approach to Chicano history. In the main, Chicano historiography exhibits an overwhelming tendency to limit analyses to themes and topics originating north of the border. Such an approach confines the analysis by failing to take into account those transnational factors, that is, U.S. imperialism, impacting on the Chicano experience. But, as Gonzales points out, Chicano historiography is not alone; the imperialist dimensions of 20th-century U.S. history are also generally ignored in academia. Nevertheless, historians have made a strong case for arguing that an economic hegemony distinguished U.S.–Mexico relations beginning in the late 19th-century. It is this domination that differentiates the Mexican immigrant experience in the United States from the experiences of other immigrant communities. Immigration studies tend to follow well-worn sociological paths that lumps all immigrants into a “one-size-fits-all” theoretical scheme. Consequently, when explicating the history of the Mexican immigrant community, in particular their educational experiences, the analysis falls wide of the mark. Gonzales presents the case that the political and economic conditions imposed on the Mexican immigrant community have led to a century of struggle for democratic schooling. However, the struggle for democratic schooling is, ultimately, a struggle against imperialism.

In *Educational Perversion and Global Neoliberalism*, Dave Hill situates the increasing inequality in and between education, economic, and social systems within the policy context of neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism is a global phenomenon—restructuring of schooling and education has taken place internationally under pressure from international capitalist organizations and compliant governments. The effects of neoliberal policies in increasing inequalities globally and nationally, in diminishing democratic accountability and in stifling critical thought is presented along with a critique of the theory of neoliberalism in education policy—in particular how the marketization of education has perverted the goals, motivations, methods, standards of excellence and standards of freedom in education. Although the intrusion of capital into education threatens to undermine one of the best sites for its contestation, there are various other arenas of resistance for cultural works to engage and these are briefly described.

According to Glenn Rikowski, “One day, a company in Detroit or Vancouver that focuses primarily on the bottom-line could control a local secondary school in England.” The general explanation for why the busi-

ness takeover of schools is occurring is based on the fact that we live in capital's social universe. However, in his chapter, Schools and the GATS Enigma, Rikowski provides multiple interlinked explanations as to how the business takeover of schools is happening, particularly in the United Kingdom, and the role that the World Trade Organization's (WTO) GATS is nurturing the corporate takeover of schools and other public services. Rikowski examines the historical contexts of the WTO and the GATs, to provide a "clearer view of the monster casting a shadow over state schools in England."

Chapters 7 and 8 examine neoliberalism and education reform through the lens of literacy policy and practices. In *A Reading Marxism*, Patrick Shannon uses Marxism to provide a historical and theoretical explanation for the alarming increase in the regulation of teachers' and students' actions as part of elementary school reading programs, to explain the commodification of literacy, and to offer explicit suggestions on what teachers and others might do. Shannon emphasizes the importance of small- and large-scale resistance movements and concludes that to really address the essence of the issues faced in reading education, we must stop the unmediated expansion of capitalism into social institutions. "This means teachers should join the movements toward livable minimum wages, national health insurance, affordable housing, and repeal of NAFTA and GATT. They should make their presence known at the protests of the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. These are large projects of possibility that show promise on a large scale."

In Chapter 8, Rich Gibson presents a critical analysis of the life and practices of Paulo Freire as a pathway for the development of a revolutionary pedagogy for social justice. Gibson's critique of Freire in theory and practice uses the central role Freire played in the development of education systems in the Grenadian revolution of 1979–1983 as a lens into the implications of his work. He critiques Freire as both the "objective idealist" and the "mechanical materialist." Freire's journey is presented as a model for how radical educators (and others) can search for answers to the questions "where do we want to go and how we hope to get there?"

Chapters 9 and 10 focus specifically on higher education issues. Meta-analyses of research in higher education typically contrast "positivist" and "cultural" conceptions of research orientations in higher education and offer varied laments about the disciplinary status of research on colleges and universities. In *The Unchained Dialectic: Critique and Renewal of Higher Education Research*, John F. Welsh provides an alternative typification of higher education research using Habermas' categories of scientific interest as a way of understanding important distinctions among methodological approaches. The chapter also examines "immanent critique" in the work of Marx, Gramsci, and Lukacs as the core of critical, dialectical, and emancipa-

tory approaches to social research. Hegel's concept of the "Absolute Idea" is also discussed as a basis for understanding the epistemological, and ontological foundations of a dialectical methodology in higher education research.

"Higher education has special stakes for capitalist rule. Universities define the skills of professional workers for labor markets, reinforce ruling ideologies, and represent the needs of the state and industry as those of society. Despite that prevalent role, students and staff often succeed in creating spaces for critical citizenship, even for overt challenges to capitalist agendas." So opens Lev Levidow's chapter *Marketizing Higher Education*. Levidow examines the neoliberal strategies used to transform higher education, specifically focusing on the information and communication technology (ICT). In the ruling ideology, marketization is attributed to the socioeconomic imperatives of ICT. In general, the neoliberal project seeks to undo past collective gains that limited labor exploitation and maintained public goods, instead fragmenting people into vendors and consumers. The chapter examines circumstances in Africa, Europe, and North America and in the process Levidow's analyzes the marketizing strategies that are being applied to higher education on global scale serve as the development of effective counterstrategies and alternatives.

The book concludes with Peter McLaren's analysis the roles of critical pedagogy and class struggles in the age of neoliberal globalization. McLaren describes how, within the North American progressive education tradition, critical pedagogy has been a widely discussed project of educational reform that challenges students to become politically literate so that they might better understand and transform how power and privilege works on a daily basis in contemporary social contexts. As a project of social transformation, critical pedagogy is touted as an important protagonist in the struggle for social and economic justice, yet it has rarely ever challenged the fundamental basis of capitalist social relations. Among the many and varied proponents of critical pedagogy in the United States, Marxist analysis has been virtually absent; in fact, over the last decade, its conceptual orientation has been more closely aligned with postmodernism and poststructuralism. This chapter argues that unless class analysis and class struggle play a central role in critical pedagogy, it is fated to go the way of most liberal reform movements of the past, melding into calls for fairer resource distribution and allocation, and support for racial diversity, without challenging the social universe of capital in which such calls are made.

It is our hope that the analysis of neoliberal educational reform provided in these chapters (as well as the suggested counterstrategies) will contribute in multiple ways to the programs of critical scholars, educators, and activists working for education and schools that serve the broad interests of the public and against capitalist educational practices.

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