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Commercialization of public education : voices of academics and educators on corporate involvement in the schools

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COMMERCIALIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION: VOICES OF ACADEMICS
AND EDUCATORS ON CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

by

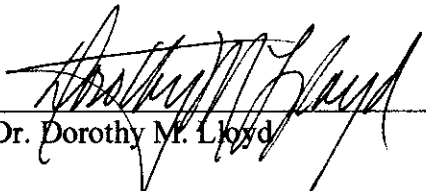
Oriana Parenti

An Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MONTEREY BAY
August 2004


COMMERCIALIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION: VOICES OF ACADEMICS
AND EDUCATORS ON CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

BY ORIANA PARENTI

APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

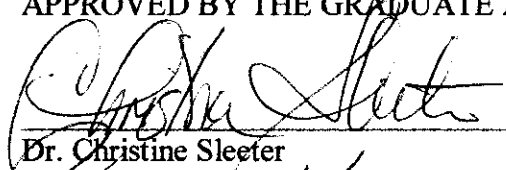


Dr. Dorothy M. Lloyd




DATE

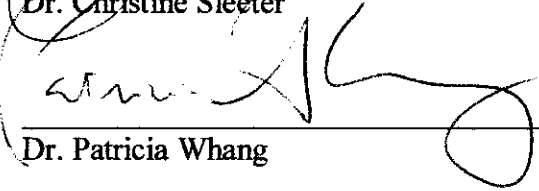
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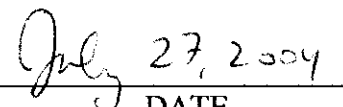
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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis investigates the origin and entry of commercialism onto the public school campus, its forms of presentation, and its manifestations in student, teacher, school, and community lives. There is a focus on defensive measures taken to both regulate the presence and restrain the growth of schoolhouse commercialism. A survey of teacher response to the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990) and to seven forms of commercialism defined by the Commercialism in Education Research Unit at Arizona State University, relates national sociopolitical trends to presence in schools on California's Monterey Bay and in neighboring districts. None of the teachers surveyed were aware of the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools, although all or nearly all were favor of each of its eight principles. Teachers reacted to commercialism on campus with overwhelming negativity. Voicing shock, despair, and frustration, educators cited many forms throughout an average school day. Some teachers accepted this despite strong disapproval in a moral bargaining of necessity. In response, this thesis offers an action resource pamphlet that arms teachers, students, parents, and community members with information about the root cause of corporate involvement in education, its modes of expression, and our rights against its encroachment.

This work is given in love and hope, to all school-age children in the United States. May they be allowed the benefits of a healthy diet, and the afforded the opportunities of an equitable teacher-to-student ratio, that can each spirit in meaningful connection to the curricula. Let this be qualified too, by nothing other being a student at any public school in this country today, and at this point in the social development of our conscience as a people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have undertaken and now complete this endeavor in gratitude to my mother and grandparents; their effort and insight afforded me the benefits of a whole, pure diet, and the privilege of an education that facilitated the engagement and authentic assessment of all students through small class settings.

This master's thesis is credited to Dr. Christine Sleeter, without whom it would have never come to be, and to the theorists upon whose research and example it is inspired and built.

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Chapter 1: Statement of Purpose, Rationale, Overview

Introduction

Commercialism on campus is not a recent event, but its present level of entrenchment and resistance to its effects are unprecedented (Molnar, 2003a). Market coveting of the public sector is similarly long-standing. U.S. financial policy set a course for a then future America whose educational deficits we suffer today back in the 1930's, when corporations, representing the wealthiest Americans, began to contribute less each year to the federal tax burden from which schools are largely funded. Estimates of \$150 to \$450 billion each year in corporate welfare subsidies are the results we feel today (*Keep the Rich off Welfare & Time*, as cited by Saltman, 2000).

What is in question is previously public money that is now diverted away from services that benefit the whole of the society, to private corporations and the individuals who profit exclusively from their activities. This is the same money that schools later enter into commercial partnerships in desperate efforts to regain, so that they may stay in the business of social investing. Profit-driven peddlers are motivated to stalk children at school, targeting lifelong loyalty branding for potential annual revenue of \$600 billion (Applebome, 1996 as cited by Giroux, 1998). They measure gain by financial profit for few personal individuals instead of by social benefits for all citizens, a goal of federal investing in public education.

There is no social or academic accounting for the fact that corporate taxes decreased from thirty-three percent of the federal tax burden in the 1940's, to less than

ten percent in 2000 (Saltman, 2000). It is citizens who continue to shoulder the increasing proportion of the federal tax burden through time, up from forty-three percent of the national tax burden in the 1940's to seventy-three percent by the early 1990's (Saltman, 2000). It is important to note that these same workers are also laboring longer and harder for fewer benefits while earning less than they did in the past, as the real working wage continues to decrease (Saltman, 2000).

Most do not hear of this raid through regular media outlets as it is the corporations themselves which own the media and print conglomerates largely relied on for news (Saltman, 2000). This undercutting of education and populace has gone largely unnoticed by the general public and unnoted by the press then, while corporate welfare has grown to be an increasingly dominant feature of American economic policy. This has been achieved through successful business lobby that promotes a profit-motivated agenda through social and financial evasion. This master's thesis examines this further, looking at the invasion of schools by business partnerships, sponsored educational materials, and even direct advertising.

History

In 1983 the Reagan administration released *A Nation at Risk*, a report on the status of the country's public education, and known for the dominant opinions of business leaders that it garnered in a never-before-seen way (Molnar, 1996; Saltman, 2000). The report charged our system of education with total failure. It undercut the foundation of our purest American dream - that of a free and equitable schooling for the benefit of

citizens, communities, and society, at the physical, social, and psychological expense of none - one protected from the private interests of the marketplace profiteer.

The report functioned to deflect attention from economic origin of issues underlying the condition public education as a result of its relationship to corporate welfare; a scapegoat had been clearly identified for constructed failings of the system; the victim was blamed for the crime done to it (Molnar, 1996). Moreover it reframed the discussion about the way in which business and schooling were related to one another, putting education into the service of the marketplace (Saltman, 2000).

A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was not the first business and political effort to open public education to private investment. It was the first time however, that the media was organized in a program of public deprecation (Saltman, 2000), and it was also the first time that the mission was achieved. A corporate conglomerate media was the missing link. This complicity was a critical component in the final clearing of the way for full entry by business and political interests into the long-desired arena of public education, our last bastion of commercial-free civic values. Funding for education diminished further as a result, leaving it rife for plunder and opportunistic colonization of commercial presence and market values.

It is not surprising to find that due to the media's uncharitable reporting of teachers, administrators, and students, the very premise on which public education is founded - the democratic conviction that recognizes inherent public value independent of any financial profit motivations - has been undermined in viewers (Saltman, 2000).

Evidence of the way in which media has become a captured corporate market rather than

a news source working for the people, is further evidenced in continued media consolidation with Federal Communications Commission compliance.

In response to these assaults, David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (1993), to whom all researchers in this paper refer, illustrated the success and accomplishments rather than the failure of the public system of education. Alex Molnar looks to their work when refuting the education attacks as unjustified and unethically motivated (1996). He continues to work today to defend public education against the defunding that resulted from the constructed crisis of *Nation at Risk* (1983) and ensuing media frenzy.

Statement of Problem and Purpose of Action Thesis

Our educational system bears a mantle of suffering. It is the struggle of the teachers, custodians, and librarians who remain, and who labor harder each year to do more with less as defunding cuts teachers, closes schools, and swells classes. Education is also the victim of the public sphere's understandable dismay, as taxpayers continue to pay more while receiving less. Beast of burden that she is then, weary from continued attack by the private sector's campaign of disdain for the public schooling mandate, and starved from years of defunding, public education today is a whore in the marketplace, the idols of which breed illness, weaken the mind, and erode self determination. Products of corporate culture – the overweight and undernourished, the over-dosed “ADHD”, and the child sufferers of adult onset diabetes, all trained to function at the lowest order of thinking and skill - give testament. What does public education do then? What now, can she do to provide for her children, the populace, and public good?

It is on this topic that Saltman writes, "...the issue of corporate involvement in public schooling cannot be considered separately from the history of the corporate evasion of social responsibility" (p. 61, 2000). Alex Molnar similarly concludes, "...schoolhouse commercialism is a reflection of larger economic, social, cultural, and political forces (p.iii, 2003a). It is the question I believe Henry Giroux (1998) was also thinking on this when he wrote that a bill of rights mediating public school and commercial business relations was needed.

Alex Molnar, working at the intersection of education, government, and business, had already developed such a code of ethics however, when he organized the meeting at which The Milwaukee principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools was drafted, later to be adopted by the state superintendents of education in Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania and South Carolina (Molnar, 1996). The National Parent Teacher Association (1991) released its guidelines for corporate involvement in the schools which are in fact the same eight guidelines previously laid out in the Milwaukee Principles, and is among a number of organizations to do the same.

The National Education Association then drafted a somewhat ambiguous version (1995) entitled the Preserve Classroom Integrity Pledge. Still, a recent report (U.S. General Accounting Office as cited by the National Parent Teacher Association, 2003, p.1) revealed that not only is commercialism pervasive in the schools, but also that there are no comprehensive state laws or regulations which control it and referring to the commercial stronghold, stated moreover that the only national policies regulating such activities are those related to school finance. There have been thirty pieces of health

related schoolhouse commercialism legislation since 1999, seventeen of which have failed, five of which have passed, and eight that are pending, in addition to three resolutions, one of which went through (Molnar, 2003b).

What effect has the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990) and its adoption in this state had on the trend of commercialism then, when an extreme expansion of figure and force on campuses and in kids across the country is both witnessed and measured - and why? This question naturally follows the one that Giroux and Molnar both asked themselves and answered in the proposal and creation of a formal charter of sorts, and is what I intend to ask of teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in Education program at California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California. It follows the chronological development of commercial entry, entrenchment, and formal response.

Media references to schoolhouse commercialism show that all but two out of eight categories tracked have more references in the last one year period than in the previous. Considering thirteen years of tracking though, it is worth noting that commercial references in some categories are rebounding after a several year period of decline caused by citizens and legislators alike taking notice of, and responding to, this historic social and economic event (Molnar, 2003a). Prior to this point, references overall have grown every year since tracking began in 1990, for ten years through 2000. The bounce back of commercialism on campus since 2002 is due to the increasing pressures on public schools to find alternate funding to sustain basic programs (Molnar, 2003a).

A tremendous problem on its own however, is the sad and startling fact that the popular, business and marketing presses still pay more attention to the commercial

activities in public education, with 5,188 references between 1990 and 2003, as compared with only seventy-six references in the education press (Molnar, 2003a). Teachers are not talking. Why not? This event is taking place within their purview. It shapes the way they do their work. They observe directly its effects on society's children and tomorrows. I wondered if other teachers were feeling the same dismay that I had in my own classroom as a witness of commercial acts.

In a general survey, I asked teachers their opinion of the Milwaukee Principles, and their belief as to why it is or is not recognized and respected, in addition to why it should or should not be, based on professional observation and experience. This I believed, would determine levels of awareness and gauge attitude with regard to commercialization and defense of public education time and space. A pamphlet that summarizes the results and includes information about the nature and origin of schoolhouse commercialism was designed for those who contributed to its findings, and for those with whom they may speak and people with whom those people may speak, so that in this way educators participate in a greater dialogue among ourselves and take the debate out the public as well.

As A Nation at Risk (1983) addressed education reform with new terms of debate, I wish also to redefine the terms used to discuss these issues. I am interested in excellence in accountability for corporations in terms of social, and economic responsibility, rather than political maneuvering and exploitations of the neediest – children! It is hoped then, that this thesis may lead to more public and government support for education over-all, thereby arming it and our kids and society at large - against negative effects of commercialization on campus.

The results of this study potentially benefit the education and public sectors by generating a greater awareness of corporate involvement, influence, and effects. It necessarily informs those working on its front lines by the nature of survey that gathers information about the ways in which the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in Schools are perceived and observed according to certificated staff. I can respond in the formation of the pamphlet which may begin a dialogue between the educational community and policy makers, for the purpose of introducing and reframing public debate on the topic of schoolhouse commercialism. It can moreover support people and organizations involved in defense of public education space, ethic, and funding, against corporate corruption of materials and environment.

Project Background

This project came about by an initial interest in corporate involvement with public schooling. It quickly became clear that a regulatory code must be created and enforced. After setting about to draft such a code, I later learned that one had in fact been in existence for fourteen years and even adopted perhaps by a superintendent of education of the very state by which I have been credentialed and employed as a teacher.

The Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990) is comprised of regulatory eight points addressing the commercial practices of private interest on public school sites in this country. It was Alex Molnar who organized and hosted the roundtable conference at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee from which the principles emerged. After first uncovering it, I was then very puzzled to discover through several phone calls with Jamie Hastings at the California Department of

Education that quite curiously, there is no record of the principles in their database or human memory. I wondered why this was and decided to ask classroom teachers about their familiarity with the Milwaukee Principles, and response to each point.

Continuing my research on the history and status of commercial control, I learned about the Commercialism in Research Unit (CERU) which is part of the Educational Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) headed by Alex Molnar at Arizona State University (ASU), and “the only national academic research center dedicated to schoolhouse commercialism.” The CERU has for six years produced an annual report on the trends in commercializing activities, which tracks eight categories of commercialism through media references across the country. This report considers analysis of trends dating back to 1990 as well, represented in research conducted by the Center of the Analysis of Commercialism in Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the predecessor to the EPSL and also directed by Professor Alex Molnar.

This master’s thesis is built also then, on this second very important document for the assessment of commercial presence. It is how I built a framework for analysis and discussion. Together with the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools, the categories of commercialism tracked and reported on by the CERU, provided the basis for half of the survey, as teachers were asked to comment on their professional observation of and opinion about seven of the eight forms. The category of privatization is excluded from the survey. Information contained in their annual report was also prepared for a failed discussion forum that I designed with the help of Dr. Christine Sleeter and Dr. Patricia Whang.

The thinking behind and throughout the development of this thesis has been furthermore to hear directly from teachers who are uniquely, and in many ways exclusively, qualified to comment on the condition of schoolhouse commercialism from the frontlines of its entry into the student environment, about what is really going on in the classroom. Moreover, the survey would serve as a gauge of teacher awareness of commercial presence on campus as well as regulatory interventions. This information in the end then, could contribute to an informed response within the teaching community resulting in a dialogue between educators and the public, private and legislative sectors for the purposes of curbing commercial growth in the schools.

Researcher Background

My experience as a teacher, in combination with my own education and upbringing from childhood, has played a critical role in the chosen topic area and action thesis that I develop as a graduate student. It is a logical outgrowth and synthesis of my life experience, and also the reason I am uniquely qualified by knowledge of health and education from a variety of perspectives. I am the daughter of a woman who found the cure for what Stanford Memorial Hospital informed the family was her certain death. She developed health through diet, the same diet now prescribed by Stanford and all hospitals for those who suffer from her former ailment, thereby inspiring my father to launch pioneer the organic and bulk foods industry. I am the daughter of a forerunner in the health and whole foods market. Today my mother outlives a terminal cancer diagnosis in full quality of life by four years now, exclusively through non-chemical/surgical means.

I ate vegetables out of my mountain top garden and self selected a vegetarian (no red meat) diet when given the choice and responsibility at three years of age. In my home

there were no sugars, boxed, or refined foods, and at the Montessori school I attended through kinder and elementary school, there was no cafeteria nor any commercial presence, no poverty, and no overweight children. Our minds ran free and developed according to independent thought drawn through a mutual vein of respect. I continued to eat live and whole foods without ridicule or alienation. I swam competitively on a local team and grew strong and lean.

When I arrived at the public junior high school in 1980, my mind and body may have been more agile than many of my counterparts, products of the public school system. Still, there were few overweight children, and no vending machines or snack shop on campus. In those days, a fat kid was a rarity, for everyone, everywhere. I attended three years of public school before finishing high school at a private preparatory boarding school for the elite or misplaced. Although there was a snack shack that provided commercial items to boarders after school, very few in the whole of the student body were overweight. I graduated in 1986, unscathed due to the privilege afforded by a largely private school education which was neither dependent on nor compromised by decreasing public funding.

A difference was evident by 1994, when I returned to education as a student teacher, and to find that a number of my second graders in a class of only twenty-four were quite noticeably overweight. When in 1998 I began work as a local middle school teacher, after three years of teaching in Japan, there was a prevalence of obese children, many of whom for the first meal of the day gorged on artificially flavored and colored, high fat content, negative nutritional value, heavily packaged “food” items at a morning snack shack. Rather dubious, many of these same children did not have enough money

for lunch at the cafeteria. More truly sickening still, many also were medicated for depression and/or ADHD or worse yet, on insulin for “adult” onset diabetes. Is it surprising that these children struggle in the classroom, given their corrupted state of mind and body? Certainly student, teacher, and society loose in this truth of today upon us. Who gains?

With the curricula dumbed down to prepackaged direct instruction programs, class size swelling, and caught among others in yet another lay-off, I have stopped on my way out the door to look back over my shoulder. I see the kids who will never once see their adult bodies without the drapings of excess packaging and consumption, a campus overrun with prescription pills and reading programs, for-sale disease, and corporate sponsored “educational” materials. I weigh the change in physical, mental, and cultural landscape carved by commercialism in schools, and ask why this happened, and how it the system that enables and supports it can be dismantled before more innocents fall prey.

These days I reflect on the immense amount of energy that I have previously put into defending the natural environment against the ravages of commercialization as a charter member and later director of an education and action non-profit, and as Chairperson of International Earth Day events in Japan. I remember my formal work as an Environmental Education Specialist and ongoing commitment through my teacher role as Recycling Program Coordinator here in Monterey County. I think about the school recycling programs that I implemented and oversaw while teaching in California. I see now familiar face and recognizable pattern – it is the insidious process of first harvesting and depleting followed by depositing and polluting bought by corporate lobby and government paybacks for private profit, an ordering of injustice and exploitation, and

ultimately – of extinction. I understand now. And I continue the fight, today in pursuit, and on new terms.

Overview of Action Thesis

We have examined the ways in which commercial interests have entered the physical and mental fields of public education, and dug deep. We know the results it breeds in our citizens, and efforts taken to restrict the disenfranchisement of students from their minds and bodies, teachers from their classes and lessons. What we do not know is how the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in Schools (1990) have affected commercial presence, or why.

Without this information we - as critical educators, public intellectuals, and cultural workers and defenders of democratic principles of social justice over corporate culture for profit which preys upon its weakest - are left to recreate the wheel. Perhaps we just need to dust it off, or give it a new finish. Perhaps it has had no vehicle before this time. Let us grease the principles now then, with the necessary momentum to dismantle a system of harvesting dollars and depositing pollution across the vanquished terrain of physical, geographical, and civic student and campus.

This written thesis, *Commercialization of Public Education: Voices of Academics and Educators on Corporate Involvement in the Schools*, is presented in five chapters. The second chapter is a literature review providing analysis of academic dialogue and research on the topic area within a critical theory context. Methodology is discussed in the third chapter, while Chapter Four continues with Results. The thesis concludes with Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions.

Chapter Two: Theory, Context, Epistemologies, Research Methods

Theorists Informing the Work

The formal research presented in this thesis is inspired by the emblematic critical theorist Henry Giroux, whom I credit fully for the action. I depend on Giroux for several articles before encountering him again as the editor of the series in which *Collateral Damage* (Saltman, 2000) appears, a book that also supports this project greatly. A former teacher of high school history, Giroux now acts as Chair Professor in Secondary Education in Penn State's College of Education. It is very important too, that he also serves as Director of the Waterbury Forum in Education and Cultural Studies, and contributes as equally to the field of popular culture as to that of education, by his own estimation (<http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/index2.html>, 1999).

Similarly *Collateral Damage*, a book about education, is the byproduct of Saltman's work as Assistant Professor in the Social and Cultural Studies in Education program at DePaul University. Like Giroux then, Saltman also combines formal research with political, cultural, and educational endeavors. Each operates between borderlands and within undefined realms, delving beneath surface differentiation to reveal deep truths.

We realize at this point that we are dealing with a systems approach in terms of accessing information about condition, cause, and cure. A cross-trained and at once pragmatic yet creative method begins to emerge with regard to the application of critical theory. From first glance through intimate encounter, this strikes me as one of critical

theory's most interesting and salient features, and one that therefore emerges as a grand theme throughout this work.

In *Collateral Damage*, Saltman frequently refers to Alex Molnar's book, *Giving Kids the Business, The Commercialization of America's Schools* (1996). Saltman also repeatedly references Berliner and Biddle's now classic work *Manufactured Crisis* (1993), which disproves claims of educational failure refuting the accuracy and relevancy of studies on which it is based. Berliner and Biddle also inform Molnar and Giroux significantly as well, evidenced by recurrent references to their work.

Another teacher-turned-researcher is the now familiar Alex Molnar, today a Professor of Education Policy at Arizona State University, but previously a high school Social Studies teacher. At ASU he also directs the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL), which is made up of five individual units of individual focus.

The Education Policy Reports Project (EPRP) is one of the five units comprising the EPSL. Noteworthy, the EPRP is directed by Regents' Professor David C. Berliner, also of ASU, and Professor Emeritus Bruce J. Biddle because of their previously mentioned coauthored book, *The Manufactured Crisis*, cited repeatedly in the work of all researchers contributing to this project's literature review. It is also significant because the EPRP produces reports that summarize its research on educational issues with a special awareness of the ways in which poor and minority students are impacted by educational policy and programs. As a cornerstone of my informant's work, it lays the foundation for this research piece.

Professor Molnar heads the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU), which conducts and reports research on this topic with the purpose of beginning a

dialogue among all concerned parties. CERU produces a report on eight categories of schoolhouse commercialism by tracking media references in the business, advertising/marketing, popular, and education presses annually, in order to obtain an approximation of the types and rates of various commercializing activities on campus.

No Student Left Unsold, the Sixth Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercialism (Molnar, 2003a) is the most recent report, and heavily informs this thesis. It furthermore includes similar research, initiated by Molnar in 1990, while at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and working under the Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education (CACE). In this way, CERU is able to analyze commercializing trends over a thirteen year period as well on an annual basis.

Yet Molnar can be credited with still another great visionary and historic act while at the University of Wisconsin. While there he also organized and hosted a meeting out of which developed the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990). It is an effort to structure a framework for the regulation of ethical relations between schools and business. Adopted by the National Parent Teacher Association, the Milwaukee Principals can be seen at their website titled, "National PTA Guidelines for Corporate Involvement in the Schools". The principles have also reportedly been adopted by Action for Children's Television, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the National Education Association.

Moreover, the superintendents of ten states are said to have adopted these eight principles designed to preserve integrity in education. The principles are reported in *Giving Kids the Business* (Molnar, 1996), and at the Education Policy Studies Laboratory

website presently, and said there to have been adopted by the following: the Action for Children's Television, the National Parent Teachers Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the National Education Association, as well as state superintendents of education in Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

Molnar's research also considers greatly the work of Ann DeVaney, author of *Watching Channel One, the Convergence of Students, Technology, and Private Business* (1994). Like Giroux and Molnar, DeVaney also started out in high school but as an English teacher, before investigating issues of representation in educational and commercial media. She shares the same curriculum vitae with the other former teachers turned technological experts who contribute chapters to her book, one of whom is noted critical theorist, Michael Apple. DeVaney then went on to head the Educational Communications and Technology program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

We see even without examining their works that in practice as well as word, critical theory and its representatives hold social concern and cultural engagement to be central to improving education. Each acts in the deep cross-sections that undercut multiple domains. My teacher colleagues and I are reminded that the public education arena is ours; we have a right to be here. It is political but worth fighting for because together and informed we can win the rights and dignity that we and our students are systematically denied.

Each of the cultural workers whose contribution is incorporated into my own offers teachers tools necessary to critically analyze attacks on public schooling and

corresponding complicit behaviors. By gaining more control over working conditions and transmitted models and pedagogies, we shall generate literacies; for it is language that both yields and wields meaning and thus culture and politics.

Critical Theory

The question that drives this action research reflects critical theory in its analysis of power and control. In asking and exploring the topic question then, the theorists to whom I have turned for my literature review – Ann DeVaney, Henry Giroux, Alex Molnar, and Kenneth J. Saltman – and I are in agreement that schools are neither apolitical nor culturally neutral sites of instruction but rather, are places of struggle over the power to determine knowledge and make meaning. Their research sets out to find answers to the question of who profits and who loses out, and specifically focuses on the means by which captains of industry lay claim to student mental and physical constructs.

Critical theory is a political movement that is only played out in an intellectual format. It employs critique as a method of investigation and skeptical questioning as a rule. Rejecting strictly positivist and qualitative approaches alike, critical theorists regard themselves as social activists engaged in a grand battle over the people's control of self-awareness, will, and governance, and defending against powerful self-serving forces of oppression. When critical theory is applied, researchers represent the perspective of oppressed social parties even when they themselves are not actually from such groups.

Theorists from this tradition do not therefore simply record data and interpret realities, but labor passionately in both rage and hope, and for liberating and power-sharing change in education, culture, and society. Although it does embody scientific

research and qualitative study, proponents define this method not as objective and removed from isolated occurrences that are observed in research, but neither overcome by interpretivist subjectivities.

Critical theory acknowledges that all things are social or relational in nature. It acknowledges that we can define truths and authenticate knowledge but with the caveat that it is hinged to coexisting and multidimensional realities, with complex context. Simplistic methodological prescription does not yield effective interventions or applications because causes of, and knowledge generated from such inquiry seek to address underlying causes and not outward symptoms. Deep causes require deep change. None of these approaches, implementations, causes, or results is linear nor can any be cleanly dissected. None direct money or power down or outward either.

Critical theory asserts that decisions are made by elite which simultaneously justify and perpetuate its plunder of natural, public, and human resources, and operates predominantly through hegemonic forces of economic reproduction. Wielding the ultimate political tools of media discourse, myth and symbol, the values, narratives, and identities of today's youth are shaped, or in this case, "branded" by meanings hidden in school text, materials, and (captive-contract) on-campus advertising.

This then is the reason for our researchers' focus on communication means used by the media and the corporate conglomerate in redefining the terms of public debate, as well as the fabricated myth of educational failure. Critical theorist know that educators and schools are transmitting not only instructional information, but also cultural and political curricula that legitimate and perpetuate power structures in which the conditions

of most are determined by the interests of a few who possess meaning making technologies and occupy venues of economic and identity oppression.

As ruling cultural and class elites consolidate financial capital and political power, the system of inequity perpetuates disproportionate power structures. This in turn continues to both create and exacerbate original preexisting conditions as secondary and tertiary results which then expand ever-outward in rings of alternating theft, injury, manufactured explanation and blame.

In response and with my colleagues, I also am willing to fight for democratic justice using the tools of formal theory and systematic research methods, in combination with an engaged critical analysis of current political, cultural and educational issues. I define myself too, as a social activist laboring for the same purposes and incorporating the same approaches, in spite of the clear fact that my own whiteness and socioeconomic opportunity have advantaged me greatly, and no doubt shielded me from the firsthand effects of compromised functional and or critical literacy, and resulting potential resistance or despair experienced by dominated groups. Like the critical theorists to whom I look in my formal research studies, I hold strong to a vision of hope for the defense and vindication of public education's unfulfilled potential to compassionately, critically, equitably, and democratically serve the public interest.

Socio -political, -cultural, and -historical Context

This thesis encompasses government activities and initiatives, private investment policy developments and desires, and the evolution of public education. This topic is situated within a sociopolitical, cultural, historical and economic context. It is the

political and economic capital which creates social and cultural constructs that serve acquisition, consolidation and control interests of the dominant group. Their power then is expressed in commercial culture and corporate pedagogies throughout the last century in U.S. schools.

Turning children and schools over to for-private profit with the support of taxpayer government subsidies unquestionably threatens democratic principles by defining the citizenry as consumers and consumables both, placing us in service as handicapped scapegoats and low-level market labor, product-branded loyalists. This cycle plays out on all economic levels as public resources are transferred privately upward though it is demonstrated that school whoring is the direct result of theft in the form of corporate lobby, welfare, and the inequities of (under)funding.

Each author examined looks to the Reagan administration's education report, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) as the harkening of privatization schemes and partnerships accepted as legitimate reform options. While prior to this time repeated business efforts to commercialize were generally repelled as undemocratic, Reagan and his business minded partners succeeded in implementing a rhetoric of efficiency in contrast to the threat of inadequate international competitive ability and comprehensive assertions of failure. It is in light of this historical corporate invasion and resulting denigration of public schooling that the authors included in my investigation address a manufactured myth of educational failure documented by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (1995).

Corporations then, have long-wanted and many-time attempted access to the public education market before gaining accepted entry with the publication of *A Nation at*

Risk (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983). The market did not provide for disenfranchised students in the past, and as a result they find themselves the primary victims of “failing schools” today. Yet most of these schools have failed on no other count than by the government’s denial of equitable investment of public funds. Poor people predominantly of color are now asked to count on the market to save them from its past neglect of community, if only allowed unrestrained access in the schools (Saltman, 2000).

This reveals that comprehensive and human concerns no longer present in educational discourse and debate are replaced by an assumed efficiency logic that has come to dominate profit defined in economic rather than human worth. Not acknowledged is the fact that schools struggle for basic funding while corporations enjoy government subsidies in the form of reduced tax rates and even rebates (McIntyre; Nguyen, 2000). Corporate welfare depletes the tax base for required social service funding, such as education. Also not duly acknowledged in the conversation then is the local, the community, the poor and economically disabled, the overworked and underpaid, the individual thinker, rather than isolated consumer or investor.

Epistemologies and Research Methods

We know that a common cord on which critical theorists string together pieces of knowledge and coil truth upon violation of natural law, is that of integration as it relates to interdisciplinary discourse in science, education, politics, culture, and society. Social context and the concern with resulting constructs that benefit a few, to the exclusion of

most is the epistemology of the critical theorists whose research informs this action research.

My initial look at the subject led in several directions. From the personal observation that inspired this action research, and reading indirectly related upon which I began to reflect, I determined that the manifestations of commercialization can be found in three venues: the first is hard copy curricula and material “donations,” the second is electronic and audio visual text, another is direct advertising and partnerships, and the last is consumable food and beverage sales.

DeVaney (1994), Giroux (1998), Molnar (1993, 1995, 1996) and Saltman (2000) confirmed these suspicions beyond what I previously could imagine, however, as they look at deep and multilayered results of unrestrained and unexamined commercial intrusion into the public educational domain. Each looks for evidence that the private sector is not the savior we are led to believe, but instead a parasite acting in its own financial interest and to the detriment of our children and society.

This story is set against the backdrop of a “corporate tax drain caused by successful corporate lobbying against taxes and social spending (which) has contributed to public schools – particularly urban and nonwhite public schools – being incapable of raising sufficient funds” (Saltman, 2000, p.61). Apple (as cited by DeVaney, 1994) illustrates an example of teachers from a destitute district facing still further deficit, filing a legal suit to eliminate such breaks.

The authors discussed here investigate corporate proliferation of materials into text, bus, hall, and billboard, and rely heavily on archived public records and consumer reports, government statistics including extensive financial data, as well as private sector

business documents such as internal memos, marketing strategies, business plans, and media text in addition to the work of one another among numerous educational/social theorists and cultural and economic researchers, journals and articles. DeVaney (1994) adds a series of case studies. And all begin their work of deconstructing text to reveal meaning, analyze financial profit, student intellectual gain or loss.

All authors find evidence throughout the body of their research, that commercial infringement in public education has potential to be or is already detrimental to children in the following ways: 1) it grooms children to be selectively ignorant consuming subjects, buying both products and cover stories, 2) it physically endanger their health, 3) it steals from them the public investment of resources that is their democratic inheritance and educational fund, 4) it makes an already uneven economic playing field even worse by preying on the most disadvantaged. 5) it alienates children, teachers, and curricula from each other, themselves, as well as limits issues of ethical prominence by rendering students helpless in critical social, moral and academic capacities as expressed in individuating market trends, and because 6) it is part of a more widespread attack on the public and poor and upward consolidation of capital by business and government, expressly evidenced in Whittle Communications' Channel One and Education Alternative, Inc.

Deemed a "cultural event," Channel One's twelve minute current events news broadcast were implemented in twelve-thousand public high schools at it peak and included two minutes of highly lucrative advertisements to a captive audience in an unprecedented move that for the first time required students -under contract - to watch commercials. DeVaney (1994) with nine other contributing authors most of whom are

professional technology professors with the exception of Michael Apple, who discusses the trend toward conservatism and corporate welfare sweeping across our nation and abroad, apply different research and survey methods, data, media text, and case studies to compliment one another in analysis and reflection throughout their investigation of the effects and non-effects of Channel One on the teens.

Guiding this book are the questions: what was involved in the implementation of Channel One, and how was it received at school boards, sites, and communities? Among many points discussed is that of an over-all quality of entertainment rather than of education pervasive in the symbolic text and coding of the Channel One format and evidenced in broken narratives yielding unstructured discourse in an unrooted context.

Giroux's research (1998) focuses on the replacement of democratic with corporate values in public schools. Examining the trend that renders teachers mere technicians and implementers of canned curriculum and standardized test prep packages Giroux looks at the efficiency-based model of "market democracy" and "consumer pedagogy." Many excellent facts and quotes regarding of the dangers of corporate ethics with examples from the other industries in the past, and arguments against unchecked corporate power are also included. Giroux (1998) looks to consumer Union Education Services to explain that impoverished schools have been forced to turn to the highest corporate bidder because they are strapped for cash.

This same source in addition to the Center for commercial-Free Public Education provide him with examples of marketing to captive kids in the school audience and examples of reframing social misconduct and environmental irresponsibility in curricula are given for the following corporations: Exxon, 7-up, Burger King, Dow Chemical,

Prozac, McDonald's, Clairol, Nike, and Dr. Pepper (Giroux, 1998). We already know that it is thought undemocratically inappropriate and a conflict of interest to allow entry of such companies to begin with, but now we are expected to divorce them from responsibility for their moral misconduct as well.

Molnar investigates the way in which corporate influence on public education has grown considerably since the 1980's (1995, 1996), and in so doing, references DeVaney's work repeatedly (1993, 1995, 1996). Examined in specific detail is Whittle Communication's Channel One's captive advertising innovation, Edison Project, whose vision rested on fewer paid teachers, and Education Alternatives Inc., which relies on cutting service labor salaries and benefits and reducing qualifications of those adults responsible for planning, implementing, and assessing classroom curriculum to no longer require valid education credentials in Baltimore City Schools.

Whittle Communication's Channel One and the successive Edison Project, is used as a clear example of how big business is making big bucks pretending to provide education innovation. It linked corporate profits and educational innovation in a way that has since become accepted as natural, necessary, and logical. And although the chain of for-profit schools also introduced by Whittle Communications known as the Edison Project and touted to feature high-tech innovations did not attract enough investors to form as planned, it too paved the way for for-profit schools as an acceptable educational policy option. This occurs however, despite the fact that its excessive and questionable behavior was shown to be bad for kids, schools, workers, and communities.

Noting that the number of school-business partnerships grew from seventeen percent in 1984, to 51 percent by the 1989-90 school year (Molnar, 1996, p.2) Molnar

also looks to Consumer's Union to show the following examples: the Potato Board, Snack Food Association's The History of the Potato Chip and Revlon's Good and Bad Hair Days Lesson. Mobil Oil. Lifetime's Learning Systems in cooperation with General Mills, Inc. provides Gushers Fruit Candy junior high science curriculum.

Other examples include Chef Boyardee, Reynolds Wrap, Schick and Gillette. Campbell's infiltrates with incentive programs to buy in large quantities like Orville Redenbacher, Hershey's Wal-Mart, while Duracell, Eastman Kodak and McDonalds have sponsored more than 100 sanctioned contests in Houston alone during the 1991-92 school year (Molnar 1993). Many other fine studies and statistics are cited, as well as profoundly revealing quotes from business, education and political leaders.

In order to illustrate the ways in which public education has been reduced to a system in which schools are reduced to businesses, students to consumers, and teachers to service labor, Saltman (2000) provides studies conducted by Center for Commercial-Free Public Education and the Consumers Union in addition to numerous, academic and statistical data. He similarly includes telling examples and quotes from the following corporations: Time-Warner, General Electric, Westinghouse, Shell Oil, McDonald's, Nike, M&Ms, Oreos, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, Exxon, Tootsie Rolls, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, and Chevron, Disney, Coke, Pepsi, ZapMe!, KIII Channel, Lifetime Learning, General Mills, Campbell's Soup, McDonalds, Domino's Pizza, Procter & Gamble, Kellogg's, National Coal Foundation, Citibank, IBM, Banana Republic, Disney, Nike, Sun Trust Equities, and pharmaceutical companies treating ADHD.

Each researcher finds that the theme of the local versus the global or corporate headquarter control is also found in privatization as it uproots school control from its community setting. The private versus the public then, corresponds to the part versus the whole in terms of a systems approach to education. In curriculum, we witness the individualizing tendencies of technological “partners” and “teachers,” electronic mediums incorporating fractured images and narratives (DeVaney, 1994) while compartmentalized information packages mimic the broader privatizing trend implicit in corporate takeover of public schools.

This shows that human concerns no longer present in educational discourse and debate are replaced by an assumed efficiency logic that has come to dominate profit defined in economic rather than human worth. The voices of the local, of community, of the poor and economically disabled, the overworked and underpaid, and individual thinker may speak more loudly against the isolating trend of the consumer and investor by defeating the logic of microeconomic market-based efficiency and revealing it to be flawed in its reasoning and results, to not produce profit except in terms of financial business interests, and to undermine the societal objectives of education.

So our researchers first establish that corporations undermine schools by diverting income away in through corporate welfare, tax breaks and subsidies from which private industry profits hugely (Apple, 1994; Saltman, 2000). Next it is shown that public education’s compromised position is used to justify entry and access to our kids’ money line, which provides a \$108 billion incentive per year, even without accounting for influence on parental spending (Sides, 1996, as noted by Giroux, 1998). Molnar (1996), puts this figure at \$160 billion, and \$57 billion for teens who also influence their parents

to spend another \$36 billion annually. Over thirteen major marketing companies that specialize in the school market, are not surprisingly identified then (Consumers Union, as cited by Molnar, 1996).

Because Whittle Communications transitioned from Channel One to the Edison Project, it is viewed by all as the bridge crossed when simple advertising pressed on to legitimizing private for-profit charter and voucher schools, which also divert money from under funded and now impoverished public education. Moreover, Whittle Communications is the poster child for high rolling corporate culture at the expense of community, workers, and taxpayers, as it moves teachers further and further out of the class and away from planning and interacting, everyone a dollar figure or test score, not hearts nor histories, nor futures to be self- authored for personal and societal development, but other-scripted for shareholders.

Now on campus in addition to society and at home, an unquestioned corporate culture is constructed upon branded youth identities informed, and therefore shaped by advertising objectives. The action thesis sets about next to subvert this dominant trend by working with teachers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Design

This thesis project examines measures taken to regulate the presence and limit the growth of corporate activities on public school time and space. I set out to determine levels of awareness and gauge attitudes among public school teachers with regard to schoolhouse commercialism, and also to extend teachers' knowledge on the topic. Knowing that the education press makes only one percent of references to commercial activities in public education and that the popular, business and marketing presses have made up the other ninety-nine percent over the past thirteen years (Molnar, 2003a), I wanted the teachers participating in this project to not only speak to one another and later to other teachers in a critically informed way, but also to dialogue with other involved parties as well. Moreover, I continue to advocate for this conversation to initiate from a newly aligned frame of reference.

I needed to hear more from those on the frontlines of this social, cultural, economic, and political event, so for the first part in a general survey, I asked volunteers with public school placement and/or experience in the classroom to respond to each of the eight tenets meant to govern commercial involvement in public schools as outlined in the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990). In the second part of the project, I invited the same survey participants to a discussion forum in order to learn more about schoolhouse commercialism, as identified by the Educational Policy Studies Laboratory and Arizona State University.

The Schoolhouse Commercialism Discussion Forum was meant to function as a venue to share observations, opinions, and ideas with regard to each of the above

frameworks for combating indiscriminate commercial growth at public schools. It is unfortunate but telling, that none of the twelve surveyed teachers participated. I believe that this is due to several factors. The first is that teachers today are generally very busy if not over-worked due to additional duties meant to compensate for shrinking budgets, while these teachers specifically were also carrying graduate units and some were commuting a distance as well.

The other reason for the failed attendance may be due to the fact that a portion of the teachers seemed quite daunted by the survey at the time it was given, despite its explicative length. These I suspect are the teachers who also were somewhat unaware of, or ambivalent about commercial manifestations on campus. Other teachers expressed futility and hopelessness with regard to commercial activities, due to the great undercutting of public education funding today. Perhaps these two groups of people underestimated the need or value of participating in the Schoolhouse Commercialism Discussion Forum.

Setting

I taught at a Monterey County, California school district for three years and never came across the Milwaukee Principles. I did witness many instances and variations of schoolhouse commercialism and its effects. It was only later that I began to recognize the larger patterns which had played out before me. Even I, a fully credentialed teacher, an insider, was puzzled by what I had observed at the time of the experience. I needed to survey my colleagues to really get my hands on curious but sparse data relevant to this

phenomenon. It is teachers who most observe schoolhouse commercialism and must advocate most vehemently for a commercially unadulterated classroom and campus.

Because I did not have a base school at the time that I was doing this thesis, CSUMB Master of Arts in Education students became my target survey participants, fellow educators working at various school sites in commutable distances to this college campus. The research was collected in three separate classrooms on the campus of California State University at Monterey Bay in Seaside, California. It also took place through the internet on a class website posting. Although I suspected there would be a significant amount of commercial presence here, I was none-the-less surprised by the local levels cited.

Research Participants

I sent an email requesting support with my thesis to eight professors of the Master of Arts in Education (MAE) program. In it I asked for permission to recruit survey and discussion forum volunteers from their classes. Two professors responded, each of whom had a class at the time of the survey. I passed out fourteen copies of the schoolhouse commercialism survey to two different MAE classes. There were in fact thirty-five students enrolled in these courses, however, only those who had public school experience were able to respond, thereby excluding the rest of the students in the classes. The questionnaire was also posted on an MAE class website, shared by fifteen students, none of whom responded. I do not know what number of this group were eligible however, as school site experience was needed.

The participants who completed the questionnaire were twelve teachers with certificated public school experience ranging from one year to twenty-seven years, and in classrooms spanning from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Subject area assignments held by the respondents include: English Language Arts, Literature, Reading, Mathematics and Industrial Technology. Teachers taught the following grade levels: kindergarten, bi-lingual first grade, third grade, fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth through the twelfth grades. Each of the teachers surveyed is also completing a Master of Arts in Education degree at CSUMB.

Data Collection

The survey that I designed, administered, and analyzed, relies heavily on the Milwaukee Principles in that teachers were asked first whether or not they were aware of them, and then later to indicate their response to each, by multiple choice and optional comment. Shown as Appendix A, the survey asks volunteers to respond to each of the eight tenets meant to govern commercial involvement in public schools as outlined in the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990). The survey also asks about seven out of eight forms of schoolhouse commercialism, as identified and researched by the Educational Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University (ASU).

Teacher background is established in Part A of the survey, including whether or not the participant is familiar with the Milwaukee Principles. Part B continues by asking teachers to indicate their observation of and response to, seven out of eight forms of schoolhouse commercialism as defined and tracked by the Commercialism in Education

Research Unit at Arizona State University. Volunteer participants consider the seven principles by multiple choice and also optional comment. Part C moves on to list seven of the eight Milwaukee Principles, and asks teachers to first indicate agreement or disagreement with the specific principle. Beyond this, there is a request to cite personal observations of this form, and to comment on it as well.

The data collection also was to include a discussion forum, intended to focus on the latest over-all trends with regard to schoolhouse commercialism, based on thirteen years of tracking research by the Commercialism in Research Unit at ASU. Additionally, two forms of commercialism in particular were to be discussed in order to compare features of manifestation and awareness. Lastly, corresponding data was prepared for teachers, as well as copies of the principles with an explanation of their origin and application.

It is unfortunate that there were no participants. Had any volunteers attended the discussion forum, I would have tape recorded it and taken notes of ideas to follow up later. Instead I made notes on correlations between this poor response and other information gained from the survey and research of books, documents, and the California Department of Education.

Data Analysis

I tallied the responses for each multiple choice and yes/no answer that I received in parts A, B, and C of the survey, and also grouped the written comments for each question, in a best to worst or least to greatest ranking when possible. When analyzing the multiple choice data, I assigned a numerical value to the multiple choice responses in

part C as follows: undecided = 0, very negative = -2, negative = -1, neutral = 0, positive = +1, very positive = +2. Once I averaged this numerical score I listed it over the total number of respondents in order to give myself and reader an accurate relative comparison for analysis as we look through the series of questions. Similarly, I assigned agreement a +1 score while disagreement is valued at a -1 in part C where volunteers are asked to indicate position with regard to all but one (privatization) form of commercialism. This number I again list over the total number of answers. Next, I looked for emerging patterns in the responses.

Action Resource Pamphlet

Through the survey, I learned that I had to make educators aware of the relationship between corporate welfare and commercial entry into curricula. It is by facilitating a more informed understanding of this relationship that we can counter the current the “gloss of charity” (Molnar, 2003a) and development under which commercial interests advance economic goals instead of public interests on public time, place, and dollar.

Also necessary, teachers would need information about way in which corporate influences gain and maintain control of lives and destinies by their presence on campus and in curricula, potentially leaving a costly clean-up for society. This means that I had to make available to teachers information about the different forms in which commercial presence pursues its interests on campus, and the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools which is meant to protect against this.

The corporately owned media tells one story of commercial involvement in the schools. Sure, the soda wars are now getting coverage, as children have literally ballooned out before our very eyes, but what about the panoramic view? Defunding public education is linked to corporate welfare. Desperate teachers ask what can be done besides selling out to corporations. The answer is that corporations must be forced to pay their fair share of the public tax burden so that funds are available for necessary government components such as education. Once this occurs, the plundering of public interest will necessarily lessen as schools no longer turn in desperation to commercial exploitation. I wanted to define these new terms of debate.

In response to the poor showing at the forum however, and in order to share the information deemed critical as a result the survey response discussed above, the idea of creating and distributing an informative pamphlet developed as a way of communicating this needed information to teachers, and forming a foundation for action. It reflects the relationship between the rise in corporate welfare and schoolhouse commercialism. It is designed to give teachers information about the background and manifestations of schoolhouse commercialization.

The action resource pamphlet can also be made available to agencies and politically active citizenry. In this way the thesis makes a contribution to the public debate on society's space, time, and values as manifested in private interests allowed to procure profit through a permissible public student/school relationship and complicit media. It necessarily includes the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990), and the eight forms of schoolhouse commercialism defined and tracked

by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory Commercialism in Education Research Unit at Arizona State University.

It will also be made available to displaced teachers who like me, now hold temporary positions at CTB McGraw-Hill educational testing company as a result of defunding as a result of lay-offs even in instances of “permanent status” as was my case. This group has been selected because they are unwitting refugees in the battle for control over education resources and influence.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter is comprised of four parts, the first three of which correspond to the organization of the teacher survey. The first section, titled *Volunteer Background*, is intended to determine the placement and experience of the teacher volunteers. Here teachers are asked also about their familiarity with the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools. The second section, *Observations and Opinions of Schoolhouse Commercialism*, asks for observances of and thoughts on seven forms of commercialism as defined by the Educational Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University (ASU). Volunteer response is requested for each of the eight tenets meant to govern commercial involvement in public schools as outlined in the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990) in the third section of this chapter titled, *Response to the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990)*. The final section of this chapter, *Frequency of Corporations Cited*, is an outgrowth of the survey itself and lists alphabetically the names of for-profit companies cited by survey participants, and the number of times the business is named by separate respondents and on different questions.

Part A: Volunteer Background

The teachers who volunteered for the survey have very diverse placements throughout the public school system in terms of subject and grade. Reflecting both veteran experience and also the most current training, the teachers' experience ranged from one to twenty-seven years. This however, had no bearing on their familiarity, or

rather lack of, with the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990). None had heard of it before.

The fact that not one of the twelve teachers surveyed had ever heard of the Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools indicates that the principles have not reached teachers through formal training nor on-site experience. We can also consider that the principles are not promoted readily by the state teacher's union either, an organization to which teachers pay compulsory fees.

Indeed my further efforts have revealed that the principles are not made available to these teachers through the California Department of Education (CDE), whose superintendent is reported by the Commercialism in Education Research Unit (CERU) at ASU and *Giving Kids the Business* (1996) to have endorsed, but of which they CDE claims no knowledge. Perhaps an equally ominous harbinger of the principles' fate, I have not been able to obtain commentary regarding this disturbing discovery, from the man who organized the meeting at which the principles were crafted, author of *Giving Kids the Business*, and Director of CERU and the Educational Policy Studies Laboratory of which it is a part, Professor Alex Molnar.

Part B: Observations and Opinions on Seven Forms of Schoolhouse Commercialism

This section covers seven forms of schoolhouse commercialism, and begins each of its seven questions with a multiple choice portion in which volunteers are asked to assess their over-all opinion of each type of commercialism listed. I tallied the responses for each answer that I received. This part of the question is next followed by a citation

and then a section of representative comments. Finally, there is a summary write-up to conclude each of the seven questions and analyses.

The initial multiple choice data in each question was assigned a numerical value to the responses as follows: undecided = 0, very negative = -2, negative = -1, neutral = 0, positive = +1, very positive = +2. Once I averaged this numerical score I listed it over the total number of respondents in order to give myself and reader an accurate relative comparison for analysis as we look through the series of questions. This is referred to in the summary write-up of each of the seven forms of commercialism reported on below.

I. Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
	XXXX	XXXX		XX	

“There are Pepsi machines all over campus, with a portion of profits ‘donated’ to the school.”

“Five years ago we were sponsored by Coke or Pepsi and it felt like our freedom was stripped.”

“Colgate gives free lessons and materials at our school. It helps poor kids to brush.”

Although two out of the ten respondents indicated a positive response to this form of commercialism, those who did not were evenly split between negative and very negative yielding an over-all score of -10 out of 10. Corporations cited by ten teachers

one time each were Taco Bell, Colgate, McDonald's, and Coke. Pepsi received two separate references.

The comment that Colgate helps "poor kids to brush" likely accounts for the positive ratings that this form of commercialism received from respondents as compared with others that rarely get such an accepting response as the survey progresses. Corporate sponsorship is accepted more readily than obvious profiteering and advertising such as the soda contracts, for example. The idea that need-based corporate involvement produces educational acceptance resurfaces throughout this body of data. In fact, we are in the midst of name and brand recognition objectives pushed forward by corporate interests, as a strategy to boost both corporate image and profit (Molnar, 2003a).

Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities is ranked the second greatest form of commercialism in terms of total references cited, after Privatization (Molnar, 2003a), which was not included in the survey. Corporate sponsorship achieves this successful entry status due to its most-traditional-standing of all the commercialism categories. As such, its profiteers are enabled to disguise it as cause-related (Molnar, 2003a).

II. Exclusive Agreements (allowing marketers exclusivity rights for a product or service to be sold on school or district grounds)

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
	XXXXX	XXXX	X		

“There are Coke machines at my school and it is unhealthy, but I don’t buy any.”

“We have Coke and Pepsi machines and Pizza Hut and Jamba Juice at lunch. It’s all junk food and terrible for kids.”

Of the ten teachers who answered this question, all but one neutral respondent felt negatively about this form of commercialism, with five feeling very negative yielding an over-all score of negative eleven over ten. In the ten teachers’ six observations of marketing campaigns present on campus, Coke received three separate citations and Pepsi two separate citations. Additionally other unnamed sodas were also mentioned. Named one time each were Pizza Hut, Jamba Juice, and a coffee cart owned by a school board member.

Exclusive Agreements as a form of schoolhouse commercialism, is recognizable in print and broadcast, as well as in machine and on body in very noticeable abundance. Most likely, this is the reason for the extremely negative response it garnered from teachers. For example, one opinion reflects awareness of the hazards involved in marketing negative nutritional value products to kids, while the other suggests a lack of awareness with regard to children’s less developed ability to discern appropriate purchases, as compared with adults.

Here emerge two salient points of the representative comments above, which shape the survey response: there is a frustrated and disheartened tone of understanding all too well for an easy spirit, the disservice that commercialism does to students, accompanied by a naiveté unaware of issues connected to this contemporary hot topic.

This person probably contributed the one non-negative response above because of this condition of naiveté.

III. Incentive Programs (using commercial products and/or services for as a reward system for academic achievement)

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
X	XX	XX	XX	XXX	

“Giving away laptops”

“Pizza Hut coupons for reading”

“Students get to go to a theme park if they read six hours at home.”

“McDonald’s coupons given by teachers as incentives”

“Scholastic book fairs close the library for a week, but I like Scholastic books.”

Again, ten teachers responded to this question, and seemed more receptive to this form of commercialism than the previous two forms as three responded positively, two neutrally, and one undecided, giving a more approving score of three over ten. None-the-less, the three positive responses still faced four negatives, two of which were very negative responses, therefore remaining the majority response. Corporations named one time each were Scholastic, Jamba Juice, McDonald’s, and Pizza Hut.

Incentive as a category is also an acceptable premise for involvement, according to the survey response. Perhaps this is because it is slanted as a legitimately justifiable benefit to children and youths. Need-based products such as laptops and books, and even

commercial recreation theme parks in this case, seem to be more easily viewed as in the best interest of kids, teachers indicate once more.

IV. Appropriation of Space (through which the naming rights or advertising space on school property is sold)

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
	XXX	XXX			

“Pepsi Cola has a ‘scoreboard’”

“Posters in the cafeteria”

“The Monte Foundation and Granite Rock donate money and goods and get advertising space in the gym.”

Six volunteers answered this question and were split between negative and very negative responses to Appropriation of Space as a form of schoolhouse commercialism lending the most disapproving score yet at negative nine over six. The gym, cafeteria, and field are named as sites of appropriation in the three observations shared. Three companies were also cited one time each, the Monte Foundation and Granite appearing for the first time in this survey while Pepsi makes its third categorical appearance, this time entering with a scoreboard.

Citations in the schoolhouse commercialism category known as Appropriation of Space grew by 196% in the popular, business, advertising and marketing, and education presses during 2002-2003, as compared with the previous year (Molnar, 2003a). As

communities across the United States see one public space after the next renamed after its corporate sponsor, the physical landscape of the educational community is staked by greedy flags bearing corporate claim to public space. Yet “the gloss of charity” has fooled no teachers who responded to the survey here.

V. Corporately Sponsored Educational Materials

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
	XXXXX	XX	X	XX	

“PG&E Science materials biased in favor of the company’s policies, presenting them as scientific ‘truth’. I threw them away.”

“Dairy Council nutrition materials, but no one else is giving us materials, so what are we going to do?”

“I think we may have this.”

“It worries me”

Ten teachers answered this question about corporately sponsored educational materials, known as SEM’s. This survey question earned an over-all (dis)approval rating of negative ten over ten despite a neutral response as well, due to five very negative response and two negatives. Corporations involved with public education in this way include and cited one time each are Houghton Mifflin, Kaplan Testing, Dairy Council, and PG&E. Additionally “the milk company” is also named.

While two out of ten teachers gave this form of commercialism a positive rating, one of these is qualified by a justification of need and neglect. This suggests that the 313% increase in combined references (Molnar, 2003a), is related to the growing need of schools as funding is cut. In addition to identification and rejection of SEM's, as well as reluctant need-based acceptance, we also see in this answer some worried as well as perhaps apathetic confusion. Each of these types of responses represents a separate grouping found repeatedly in the data. For example, there is evidenced simultaneously, a desperate and defeated acquiescence, a critical reading and firm rejection, vague malaise, and again, that old naiveté rife with opportunity for private profit interests.

VI. Electronic Marketing (using electronic media including radio, television and internet to reach students at school)

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
X	XXXXX	X	X		

“We have Channel One News and it pumps in commercials; I don’t like it, but we need money so badly that we take it, but I tell the kids about how they are a captive audience; they love it and it reaches them, but I have to have them “plug in” to it.”

Eight teachers answered this question giving electronic marketing an over-all score of negative eleven over eight. Above we see one negative and five very negative

responses flanked by a neutral and undecided response. Channel One is cited two separate times, each by different respondents.

The score would have been even more rejecting of this form of commercialism however, if not softened by financial need that eases the harshness of unadulterated response. A bargaining with the service and with oneself is apparent in the teacher opinion expressed, and extends further, this now strongly asserted theme. Nation wide, references to this category of commercialism are made primarily of Channel One citations (Molnar, 2003a) and not surprisingly, this thesis project survey has found the same results.

VII. Fundraising

<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Very Negative</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Very Positive</i>
	X	XXXX	XXXXXXX	X	

“Various selling schemes, but it helps with money”

“I’ve seen this more than anything, but their parents cannot afford to give them money.”

“I never thought about how sneaky it is to have the kids selling See’s Candy.”

“Schools should be funded from public funds, and not by teachers and children selling chocolates.”

“I think it is fucking bullshit commercialism, materialism – kids in phone booths with money blowing around.”

Eleven teachers answered this question about fundraising as a form of schoolhouse commercialism. One of the most generously accepting score yet, fundraising produced a negative five out of eleven. Gathering more neutral responses than any other, one teacher felt positive with regard to fundraising while four believed it to be negative, and one thought it to be very negative. Hershey's, Avon, and See's Candies are cited one time each.

Representative comments once again express a need-based willingness to compromise which tempers response that volunteers ultimately select. Resistant feelings include indignity and anger. For example, financial desperation gives way to moral compromise and defeat for some teachers, while some others resist in critical confidence, and still others reflect those who are not yet sure, and those who are so sure as to be enraged. It is worth noting here, that as with the local handful of teachers represented by this survey, the most salient themes emerging nationally from The Sixth Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercialism (Molnar, 2003a) are those of financial dependence on outside funds to cover basic operational costs, and a "growing ambivalence ranging to hostility that some parents and even school officials expressed toward the necessity of funding" (page 58).

A general pattern emerging from this portion of the survey is one that showed teachers to be very critical of schoolhouse commercialism over-all. Another theme that revealed itself however, is that although most felt very negatively about it, they none-the-less seemed able to compromise on the basis need - without alternative - viewing the option as a last resort, as it were. In fact, little more than half of the teachers didn't seem

to see anything wrong with Fundraising as a form of schoolhouse commercialism, raising the question of whether or not it is even viewed as a form of commercialism at all. Quite traditionally accepted, Fundraising on campus hides its identity as form of commercialism, under the “gloss of charity” (Molnar, 2003a).

Incentive Programs seems to be the next most acceptable form of schoolhouse commercialism, coming in with a wide range of opinions reflected in representative comments. After that, most teachers were critical of most other forms of commercialism. Most teachers did not approve of schoolhouse commercialism then, assessing its manifestations very negatively; only one or two teachers responded neutrally to positively to some forms of commercialism.

Part C: Response to the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990)

In this section respondents are initially asked if they either agree or disagree with the principle listed. I assigned agreement a +1 score while disagreement is valued at a -1. This number I again list over the total number of answers. For each of the eight principles, some quotations are given next with regard to whether or not the principle has been achieved at the various respondents' school sites, as well as any applicable observations and/or comments. Lastly, a summary write-up concludes each of the eight questions and analyses.

I. Corporate involvement shall not require students to observe, listen to, or read commercial advertising

I agree with this principle ____ I disagree with this principle ____

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

“Largely achieved”

“Good because few elementary students carry money”

“We talk about what is being observed.”

“It is observed except in the cafeteria.”

“There are ads in the gym and there are also sodas and soft drinks.”

Twelve volunteers answered this question about the first point of the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools. Among them there was full agreement with this principle, earning a plus twelve over twelve. As to whether or not it has been achieved, the five comments listed here are mixed somewhat evenly. The question of younger students being less targeted is raised, and soda and soft drinks listed.

The general awareness level seems to be high, most likely because this form is easily identifiable and less justifiable for student benefit in eyes of teachers, as discussed earlier. Also noted in an earlier portion of the survey, here too the cafeteria/gymnasium is an area of commercial prevalence.

is the reason for the allowance of commercial entry then; for it is this need which continues to assert itself as the forerunning link between the defunding of public education, and an uneasy acceptance of private interests at play on campus.

III. Since school property and time are publicly funded, selling or providing free access to advertising on school property outside the classroom involves ethical and legal issues that must be addressed

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

“We need support that no one else will give us, so we disagree but we still do it out of need.”

“The Coke machines and cafeteria food violate this principle. So does the fundraising and I hate the military recruiting.”

All twelve teachers agree with this principle, mirroring their strong disapproval of its presence in Part B. The resulting 100% approval rating reflects volunteer answers in Part B also. Coke is cited one time. One particular site is said to be very good without any qualifying comment. Still another gave the same answer explaining, it is due to the fact that it lacks a playing field to be procured for ad space, important because fields have been seen as sites of high commercial presence through the data presented in this survey.

Need appears the primary cause of permitted violation of this principle, as witnessed previously. Yet so too is a healthy and informed resistance, one that takes root in the responses given and promises perhaps to be strong enough to propel and suspend a movement.

IV. Corporate involvement must support the goals and objectives of the schools.

Curriculum and instruction are within the purview of educators

I agree with this principle	_____	I disagree with this principle	_____
XXXXXXXXXXXX		X	

“Good”

“Largely achieved”

“We do achieve this at our school.”

“Wells Fargo gives money that he school uses as it needs to”

All twelve teachers responded to this question with eleven agreeing with the principle while one does not, explaining “I disagree because I think families and students are stakeholders in education.” This suggests that were the principle to include these stakeholders, the disapproving respondent would agree with the idea that corporate involvement must support goals and objectives of the schools with teachers overseeing instruction.

With the exception of one respondent who noted that “Educators are rarely consulted,” other responses quoted above indicate a greater success with regard to implementing this principle at the sites represented than in other categories. Providing hope, responses here indicate that perhaps some educational areas are still unadulterated by commercial interest. We may believe for now then, that the classroom is somewhat intact as a bastion of teacher purview and public interest.

- V. Programs of corporate involvement must be structured to meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and must be evaluated for educational effectiveness by the school/district on an ongoing basis

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

XXXXXXXXXXXX

“Yes”

“Largely achieved”

“I don’t think our school ever considers this.”

“It would be great if corporate involvement could be structured to meet educational needs of students.”

Eleven teachers responded to this question, all of whom agree with this principle. While two comments suggest it is all or largely achieved, the later two contradict the former.

Teacher attitude shows our now familiar mix of the critically aware with regard to the nature of commercial presence, accompanied by the opinion that one's own school site is vulnerable due to lack of consideration at the school site. This, it can be assumed, is the result of naiveté, ignorance, or a cover for desperation.

VI. Schools and educators should hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials

I agree with this principle	_____	I disagree with this principle	_____
XXXXXXXXXX		XX	

“Donations seem to be exempt.”

“Many corporate materials are donated and some teachers use them uncritically.”

“If the material is donated it's up to the teacher to decide whether to use it or not.”

“Although I agree with this principle, I would feel freer to throw out donated material.”

Nine out of eleven respondents agreed with this principle while two disagreed, giving it an over-all rating of plus seven over eleven, certainly a majority approval. Five teachers commented on its level of achievement at their school sites suggesting a primarily negative condition with regard to implementing this principle, four of which are quoted above. The amount of materials received also determines level of this principle's

use or not as explained another teacher, “Very little is donated so we do not confront this issue.”

Critical awareness among colleagues according to one teacher surveyed is not applied to this form of commercial presence. It seems to be high among respondents however, as evidenced by the comment, “Many corporate materials are donated and some teachers use them uncritically.” At least teachers are talking here - even if they are only saying that teachers are not talking enough - about sponsored educational materials or SEM’s. Closest to the classroom, SEM’s confront teachers most directly. It is very close indeed, to a teacher’s personal experience.

VII. Corporate involvement programs should not limit the discretion of schools and teachers in the use of sponsored materials

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle ____

XXXXXXXXXX

X

“Why donate if you can’t use or share with anybody?”

“We do have Macs donated with no strings attached.”

“Many teachers use materials uncritically.”

“Teachers should have full discretion of how they use sponsored material.”

One out of ten teachers who responded disagreed with this principle while the other nine are in agreement. Producing a +9 over 10 or ninety percent approval rating,

teachers surveyed here are still mixed on whether it has been achieved at their various sites. Testimonies of its presence were given in three comments.

Somewhat murky is one “non applicable” response, as well as the ambiguous statement, “It has been achieved as far as I know.” The last response echoes ever-present teacher uncertainty around this epidemic which occupies the teaching environment. With regard to other comments quoted above, it seems that teacher control is asserted, as well as an understanding of the reciprocal relationship. The Macintosh citation understandably generates acceptance of this form of commercial presence, observed earlier, as it bears the entry token of benefit to children.

VIII. Sponsor recognition and corporate logos should be for identification rather than commercial purposes. (Logos to identify contents of package rather than to identify corporate sponsors)

I agree with this principle ____ I disagree with this principle ____

XXXXXXXXXXXX

“I guess that it has been achieved because I am not aware that it has not.”

“It has not been achieved at all in the cafeteria, or with regard to the donated materials.”

Eleven teacher volunteers answered this question, all in agreement with this final principle. Opposite ends of this range are represented by the quotes shown above. The

commercialism itself seems to be present at lower levels than previously discussed and is explained by the comment that “Little is donated,” and limited somewhat “to local business”. The cafeteria, as shown in the quote above, is again a danger zone for commercial violation.

Comments offered with regard to the implementation of this principle suggest a range of vague to precise awareness of this type of commercial presence, which reflects the actively informed teacher and the unknowing counterpart.

The great majorities of teachers then, both disapprove of schoolhouse commercialism and also agree with each of the eight principles surveyed in this portion. The one exception that has emerged however is cases of perceived need for materials and funding without any alternative source besides schoolhouse commercialism.

Also evident was the negative value food marketing prevalent in the great number of references to the cafeteria, or in the case of elementary schools, the dual purpose gymnasium. Here as well as in hallways too, soft drink companies seem to be battling out an aggressive competition against each other, Coke and Pepsi head to head in ring. No doubt, they have the most active programs of commercialization in the perception of the twelve teachers, as evidenced by the chart that follows, showing frequency of corporation citations by the teachers. Other fast foods come in behind soft drink companies then as we can expect, and which is also demonstrated by the chart on the following page.

Part D ~ Frequency of Corporations Cited

Coke
XXXXX

Pepsi
XXXXX

Channel One
XX

Jamba Juice
XX

Pizza Hut
XX

McDonald's
XX

American Dairy Council
X

Avon
X

Colgate
X

Granite Rock
X

Hershey's
X

Houghton Mifflin
X

Kaplan Testing
X

PG&E
X

U.S. Military
X

Wells Fargo
X

Macintosh
X

See's Candy
X

Taco Bell
X

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, Conclusions

Overview and Objectives

This master's thesis investigates the organized resistance to the influence and entrenchment of schoolhouse commercialism, against the backdrop of its origin and evolution. It endeavors to collect and relate information with consideration of the nature and effects of commercializing activities on campus. Specifically, the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990) are examined in order to determine teachers' awareness of and response to the commercialization and defense of public education, for the purpose of reinforcing the resistance movement.

This thesis pursues the now fourteen year old set of principles by collecting feedback from teachers on both the presence of schoolhouse commercialism, and perceptions of the Milwaukee Principles, in order to learn what has become of them, what should be done with them, and why. In a paper and pencil survey, volunteer teachers also reported many regularly occurring instances of commercial activity at their school sites. Voicing surprise, hopelessness, and frustration, they related national sociopolitical trends of schoolhouse commercialism to local manifestations on the Monterey Bay and in neighboring school districts.

Thinking and communicating about this topic in this way necessarily generates heightened awareness, and begins to move toward several more aims of this thesis: for teachers to think and talk about schoolhouse commercialism with each other and then with those outside schools, pursuing an agenda of securing adequate public funding. An invitation for teachers to enter the public domain of education advocacy, this thesis urges a reframing of the school reform debate. It offers a realignment of the terms used to

define the relationship between corporate welfare, school funding and commercial activity on campus. It creates space for educators to participate in this new and expanded conversation.

Discussion

The Disconnect

A striking feature of the research data as a whole was the lack of awareness of or involvement with this topic over-all, on the part of the educational community at multiple levels. Beginning with the survey volunteers, none of the teachers had heard of the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools. Many had confusion interpreting the survey, despite its descriptive length. Several responses showed naiveté in the midst of commercial presence. Teachers did respond very negatively to schoolhouse commercialism, citing many of its forms throughout a regular school day, and were entirely positive with regard to the principles. No teachers, however, participated at the planned discussion forum.

The lack of participation was perhaps influenced by factors discussed in chapter three, such as the reality that teachers already working “full-time” were most likely working much more than this to compensate for shrinking budgets, in addition to taking graduate classes in the Master of Arts in Education program at CSUMB. This lack of educator discussion on the topic however, is also a theme found in thirteen years of tracking media references, which shows that the education press has produced only one percent of total references to commercializing activities as compared with the popular, marketing, and business presses (Molnar, 2003a).

To compensate for this, I could have expanded my possibilities for teacher turnout by convincing more professors to let me have access to their students for the survey, and then do a more tempting job of enticing them to the forum. Although abundant opportunities to receive organizational materials, and relax over appetizers were both offered and provided, I do believe it would have been better to have held the forum on a day that teachers were already on campus for other classes. This forum unfortunately was slated for a day on which classes had been cancelled, and commuters welcomed this opportunity for rest, I believe.

The California Department of Education, whose superintendent was reported to have adopted the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (Molnar, 1996), did not have a record of the adoption when researching my query in the spring of 2004. This theme was extended when I unsuccessfully attempted to contact Alex Molnar to comment on this curious situation. Although he did not ever speak to the issue of my email regarding the *adoption* of the principles, I was sent an initial response, stating that the principles could be found on the EPSL website. I did not receive a response to my next email however, in which I explained again, that I was seeking information not on where the principles are listed, but about how, when, and by whom specifically, they have been adopted. In each of these emails I explained the status in California.

The lack of response that I received about this issue, leads me to believe that while he does not respond about the condition of the principles in California today, Professor Molnar still considers the principles to be current in that they are posted on the website and that he does refer to them. Moreover, the principle's instigator continues to

be active as the leader in this field of research, so perhaps has more pressing issues at the Education Policy Studies Laboratory than the principles today. I do not rule out the likelihood as well, that the principles are of a lower priority than they used to be for the great defender, although none-the-less still relevant and valid. It is also possible that for some reason, he never received or read my second email, detailing that it is information about the principle's adoption that I am seeking in order to assess their current status.

Clearly though, a disconnect has occurred around the principles and their adoption, at several levels.

Survey

In my survey, I found teachers willing to accept business arrangements out of desperation, uncovering the link between perceptions of need for materials and willingness to accept commercial activities in public schools. There emerged a willingness to compromise in need-based circumstances although most felt negatively about it, which is rather significant as it is nothing other than dire need that characterizes the public school system funding crisis today. I am not the first to claim that corporations are draining the country of funds for schooling though (National Education Association, 2004; Saltman, 2000), and also that this puts schools in a position to accept business propositions in order to raise them (Molnar, 2003a; Saltman, 2000).

In fact, more than half of the teachers surveyed indicated that there is nothing wrong with fund-raising. While this is not the most traditional form of commercialism, it is none the less quite traditionally accepted; it is quite easy to disguise as beneficial to the

school and students. It may be possible also, that many teachers do not even view it as a form of commercialism because it is so entrenched in the grade school milieu.

The next most acceptable form of commercialism after this was incentive programs, which inspired quite a mix of opinions. Most teachers expressed criticism of most other forms of commercialism. A couple of teachers had neutral to positive responses to some of the other forms of commercialism yet the great majority disapproved, expressing criticism.

The survey also revealed that soda companies have the most active programs of commercialization in the perception of the twelve teachers which underscores Saltman's findings (2000). Coke and Pepsi are in fact tied for the highest number of overall citings by the group. Other fast food companies come in behind these soft drink companies. Teachers list the cafeteria as a primary site for commercialization no doubt, because of its association with negative value consumption products.

“Two Paths Diverged in a Wood (Frost, 1916, p. 1)”

We do not have the media as a form of news to inform, but rather to shape our thoughts, and a concerted undermining of all things public leaves a community after community with no billiard room nor dance hall social (Saltman, 2000), the public having already fallen to inward isolation and over-seas relocation. Corporations turn local control to distant. Schools become the one hold-out bastion of democracy and civic discourse. It is our last stand, the final line to be crossed, before its pure intent is leveraged away from us (Giroux, 1998).

Saltman (2000) offers evidence and no doubt a quick listen to the news lets us know soon enough, that reports of a strong economy refer to stocks, shares, and those who own them, not those who labor to produce them. So as public good is replaced by private good, public culture is replaced by corporate culture and the language of the market becomes a substitute for the language of democracy (Giroux, 1998). The citizenry is rendered a consumer. Profit replaces community in objective setting, thereby channeling not only power, money and physical energies ever upward, but also educational access and socioeconomic opportunity.

Giroux (1998) also points out that history confirms corporate drive for profit is in fact the impetus for "...slavery, ongoing through unofficial segregation; the exploitation of child labor; the sanctioning of cruel working conditions in coal mines and sweatshops; and the destruction of the environment..." (p. 3). To the list of previously permitted private industry abuses, the unmet social needs in the form of modern-day market neglects prevalent in the need for uncontaminated food, adequate health care, safe transportation, and the cigarette industry's planned addiction and resulting deaths of American smokers.

Giroux then looks to Molnar who concludes for him that, "...the market does not provide 'guidance on matters of justice and fairness that are at the heart of a democratic civil society'" (Molnar, as cited by Giroux, 1998, p. 3). In these instances, the desire to maximize profit while cutting cost has led down dark paths that diverge from the interests of the people who corporations and government both traditionally and today, claim to serve.

The likelihood that teachers will teach critical thinking skills with regard to corporate or non-corporate curricula or link classroom practices to political policies relevant to the community, is lessened with each new infiltration of advertising text and each assault of white collar speed up. This original skill and noble right of educators then, is both another treasure up for auction at the school fundraiser and too, the very thing which we must harness in order to avert this fate.

Efficiency-based logic of the market shrinks teacher's spheres to the technical, thereby removing them from the planning, implementing and assessing that was formerly their domain. With scripted instruction packages, centralized standards, and corporate-designed and scored achievement tests, teachers are moved further and further away from their required role as life leader and authentic social model.

Disempowered, disengaged, and disheartened teachers perpetuate the same in students. And apathy and inability to critically analyze, act, shape and determine one's personal life is a deadly character trait for society as well as individual. And here we find ourselves: in the worst budget crisis since World War II (National Education Association, 2004) with schoolhouse commercialism at a thirteen year high in all but two out of eight categories as a result (Molnar, 2003a), Moreover, corporate tax breaks and rebates rage ahead at high speed (National Education Association as cited by The Progress Report, 2003).

This commercial entrenchment and growth is the direct result of the public funding crisis. Money is flowing the wrong way, and we must turn it around. To do this we must first enter the conversation, and reverse the proportion of our one percent of

media references cited over thirteen years of tracking, as compared with the popular, marketing, and business presses (Molnar, 2003a).

Let us choose now the path less traveled, that with heart, that of truth and justice; for it is our own voice we hear beckoning us.

Implications and Recommendations

The Noble Task before Us

We in the educational community must act now to defend the concept of education as a public good in equitable service to the people, from continued attacks by private business interest, politicians, and media that degrade this American ideal. Giroux (1998) and Saltman (2000) warn us that the very idea of democratic principles have been co-opted for corporate use. Wright notes, "...an increasing number of young people, when asked to provide a definition for democracy, answered by referring to 'the freedom to buy and consume whatever they wish without government restriction'" (as cited Giroux, 1998, p. 1).

For far too long we have been on the defensive, running from the same accountability charge on an uneven field. It is time now to turn this around, adopt an offensive game plan, and debate critically the social and financial accountability of corporate welfare and commercial development of student body and campus. Let us publicly question the nature of this slanted arena we call public education in America today. As this debate is reframed in the mainstream political and media conversation by

connecting corporate welfare and “failing” schools, public and government support for education may be heightened.

Action Resource Pamphlet

To facilitate an expanded dialogue, a pamphlet that also contains facts on the nature and origin of schoolhouse commercialism was created. This provides a venue to introduce new terms of discussion not only within the educational arena, but also for public debate with business, media, and policy makers. It arms teachers, students, parents, and community members with critical information about the ways in which commercialism can present itself on campus, its causes, and our rights against its encroachment. In this way, the education and public sectors are served by a greater awareness of corporate involvement, influence, and effects, and are better prepared to protect our kids and society.

The pamphlet will be sent by electronic mail to any of the teachers who volunteered for the survey, and who reply with an interest in receiving it. Those who do will be encouraged to share it with their associates. I will also offer to present the pamphlet and process to other graduate students in the next thesis preparation course at CSUMB. This plan for distribution is also complimented as well, by the possibility that organizations that are involved in defense of public education space, ethic, and funding, against corporate corruption of materials and environment may want to use it as a resource. Possibilities include, but certainly are not limited to Kids First, Rethinking Schools, Commercial Alert, or Global Exchange.

I also will distribute the pamphlet to teachers, with whom I now work as resource employees for CTB McGraw-Hill testing company, which is a result of district cut-backs, lay-offs, and closures that my former and other nearby districts have suffered. I will identify them in conversation, and also through a posting on a sign board (Appendix H).

Additionally, I plan to pursue the publication of a short article on the topic of this thesis in *Rethinking Schools*, a magazine for education activists.

What follows on the next five pages shows all components of the pamphlet, which is formatted as such in the Appendix (B).

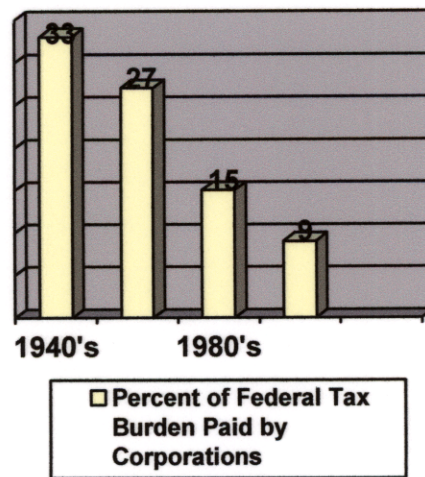
Schoolhouse Commercialism

Learn...

- *How to identify it*
- *How it relates to school funding and corporate tax subsidies*
- *About its background and current trends*
- *What is being done to regulate it*
- *How to protect your school and community*

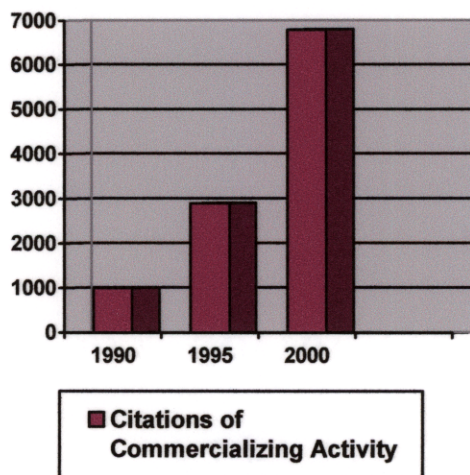
*Oriana Parenti
California State University Monterey Bay
Master's of Arts in Education Program
100 Campus Center Seaside, CA 93955*

Corporate Welfare Drains Tax Base



Corporations are the biggest recipients of public funds. Successful lobbying has greatly reduced corporate tax rates - to as little as nothing and even less than zero in some cases (McIntyre; Nguyen, 2000). A funding crisis now plagues public education due largely in part, to this evasion of social responsibility (Saltman, 2000).

Schools Turn to Commercialism



After depleting the tax base that funds public schooling, commercial interests then gained entry into the desperate schoolhouse, in a climate of demand for accountability, and under the gloss of charity (Molnar, 2003a).

Background of Schoolhouse Commercialism

- Schoolhouse commercialism began its present growth spurt under the Reagan Administration. Asserting failure of the school system without addressing the economic causes, the *A Nation at Risk* (National Council on Excellence in Education, 1983) report led to diminished public support, and opened the way for business partnerships to remedy the perceived problem.
- Public education funding has been greatly reduced in relation to growing corporate tax breaks that deplete the federal tax base.
- Schoolhouse commercialism and its negative effects have grown, as desperate schools acquiesce in the search for alternate means to fund basic services.
- The rate of growth is rebounding in 2003 after a two year decline that corresponds to an initial surge of resistance (Molnar, 2003a).

Forms of Commercialism in Education

- ***Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities***
- ***Exclusive Agreements***
(Allowing marketers exclusivity rights for product or service to be sold on school or district grounds)
- ***Incentive Programs***
(Using commercial products and/or services for as a reward system for academic achievement)
- ***Appropriation of Space***
(Through which the naming rights or advertising space on school property is sold)
- ***Corporately Sponsored Educational Materials***
- ***Electronic Marketing***
(Using electronic media including radio, television and internet to reach students at school)
- ***Privatization***
- ***Fundraising***

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Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990)

- Corporate involvement shall not require students to observe, listen to, or read commercial advertising.
- Selling or providing access to a captive audience in the classroom for commercial purposes is exploitation and violation of the public trust.
- Since school property and time are publicly funded, selling or providing free access to advertising on school property outside the classroom involves ethical and legal issues that must be addressed.
- Corporate involvement must support the goals and objectives of the schools. Curriculum and instruction are within the purview of educators
- Programs of corporate involvement must be structured to meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and must be evaluated for educational effectiveness by the school/district on an ongoing basis.
- Schools and educators should hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials.
- Corporate involvement programs should not limit the discretion of schools and teachers in the use of sponsored materials.
- Sponsor recognition and corporate logos should be for identification rather than commercial purposes.

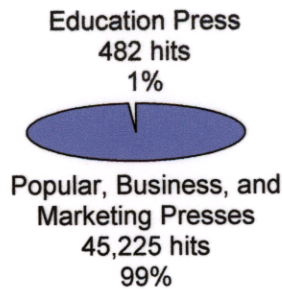
The principles have been adopted by the National Parent-Teachers Association, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Education Association, and Action for Children's Television (Molnar, 1996). They are endorsed by nine superintendents of education.

Defense of the Public School Student and Environment

- Talk to people in your community to build a coalition for actions organized around limiting schoolhouse commercialism.
- Write to your local school board requesting a ban or reduction on schoolhouse commercialism. Include signatures of your coalition members, and send a copy to your local newspaper, radio, and television stations. Ask the school board for a meeting. Follow up with all parties.

- Lobby your state representatives to introduce and support legislation aimed at controlling the growth of commercialism on campus.
- Contact www.commercialalert.com, info@commercialalert.org, or (503) 235-8012 for arguments against schoolhouse commercialism, more information and ideas, or updates and support.

Educators Missing from the Conversation



References Tracked in Education Presses Vs. Three Other Presses From 1990-2003

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“If the forces of corporate culture are to be challenged, educators must enlist the help of diverse communities; local, state, and federal governments; and other political forces to ensure that public schools are adequately funded so that they will not have to rely on corporate sponsorship and advertising revenues.”

~ Consumer Union Education Services
as cited by Henry Giroux, 1998, p.7

Conclusions

There is a faint rhythm growing stronger as it nears, a rally cry for teachers to claim the title of cultural worker. It beats out:

If the forces of corporate culture are to be challenged, educators must enlist the help of diverse communities; local, state, and federal governments; and other political forces to ensure that public schools are adequately funded so that they will not have to rely on 'corporate sponsorship and advertising revenues' (Consumer Union Education Services as cited by Giroux, 1998, p.7).

This is the vision of the public intellectual (Giroux, 1998), and of the world and future that we are now called upon to show to ourselves and our students in order to realize social and economic justice, ethical practices, and sustainable communities from the urban to the natural world. Those of us most directly involved must act on behalf of those most critically affected, and least able to protect themselves. We, who are given more through our elevated awareness and membership in the educational community, are in turn are required to do more.

Bless us now as we endeavor to do what has been asked of us then, for the highest goodness. And so it is.

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Appendix A: Schoolhouse Commercialism Survey

A. Background

1. In what subject, grade level, and position are you currently working or placed?
2. How many years of school site experience do you have?
3. Are you familiar with the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools (1990)? Yes ____ No ____

B. Observation and Opinion

For each of the following forms of schoolhouse commercialism listed below, please describe your own observations, and circle the opinion that reflects your view of its presence on campus

1. Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities

Observation:

Opinion:

Undecided

*Very
Negative*

Negative

Neutral

Positive

*Very
Positive*

2. Exclusive Agreements (allowing marketers exclusivity rights for product or service to be sold on school or district grounds)

Observation:

Opinion:

Undecided

*Very
Negative*

Negative

Neutral

Positive

*Very
Positive*

3. Incentive Programs (using commercial products and/or services for as a reward system for academic achievement)

Observation:

Opinion:
Undecided *Very Negative* *Negative* *Neutral* *Positive* *Very Positive*

4. Appropriation of Space (through which the naming rights or advertising space on school property is sold)

Observation:

Opinion:
Undecided *Very Negative* *Negative* *Neutral* *Positive* *Very Positive*

5. Corporately Sponsored Educational Materials

Observation:

Opinion:
Undecided *Very Negative* *Negative* *Neutral* *Positive* *Very Positive*

6. Electronic Marketing (using electronic media including radio, television and internet to reach students at school)

Observation:

Opinion:
Undecided *Very Negative* *Negative* *Neutral* *Positive* *Very Positive*

7. Fundraising

Opinion:

5. Programs of corporate involvement must be structured to meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and must be evaluated for educational effectiveness by the school/district on an ongoing basis.

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

To what extent do you think that this principle has been achieved at your school site?

Why or why not?

6. Schools and educators should hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials.

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

To what extent do you think that this principle has been achieved at your school site?

Why or why not?

7. Corporate involvement programs should not limit the discretion of schools and teachers in the use of sponsored materials.

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

To what extent do you think that this principle has been achieved at your school site?

Why or why not?

8. Sponsor recognition and corporate logos should be for identification rather than commercial purposes. (Logos to identify contents of package rather than to identify corporate sponsors)

I agree with this principle _____ I disagree with this principle _____

To what extent do you think that this principle has been achieved at your school site?

Why or why not?

Thank you for your help.

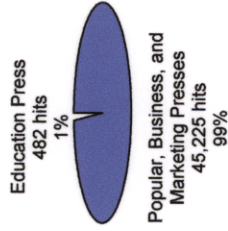
Background of Schoolhouse Commercialism

- Schoolhouse commercialism began its present growth spurt under the Reagan Administration. Asserting failure of the school system without addressing the economic causes, the *A Nation at Risk* (National Council on Excellence in Education, 1983) report led to diminished public support, and opened the way for business partnerships to remedy the perceived problem.
- Public education funding has been greatly reduced in relation to growing corporate tax breaks that deplete the federal tax base.
- Schoolhouse commercialism and its negative effects have grown, as desperate schools acquiesce in the search for alternate means to fund basic services.
- The rate of growth is rebounding in 2003 after a two year decline that corresponds to an initial surge of resistance (Molnar, 2003).

Defense of the Public School Student and Environment

- Talk to people in your community to build a coalition for actions organized around limiting schoolhouse commercialism.
- Write to your local school board requesting a ban or reduction on schoolhouse commercialism. Include signatures of your coalition members, and send a copy to your local newspaper, radio, and television stations. Ask the school board for a meeting. Follow up with all parties.
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Schoolhouse Commercialism

Learn...

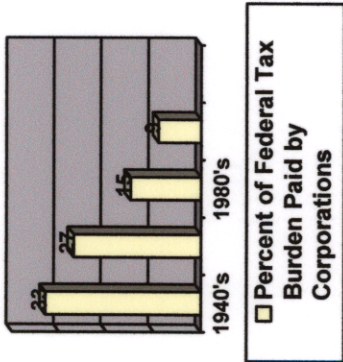
- How to identify it
- How it relates to school funding and corporate tax subsidies
- About its background and current trends
- What is being done to regulate it
- How to protect your school and community

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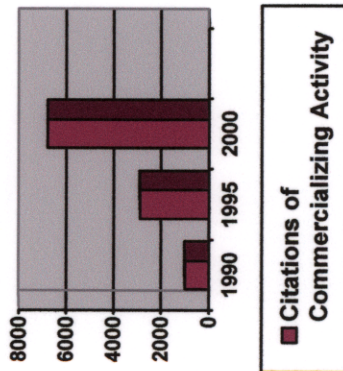
Oriana Parenti
California State University Monterey Bay
Master's of Arts in Education Program
100 Campus Center Seaside, CA 93955

Corporate Welfare Drains Tax Base



Corporations are the biggest recipients of public funds. Successful lobbying has greatly reduced corporate tax rates – to as little as nothing and even less than zero in some cases (McIntyre; Nguyen, 2000). A funding crisis now plagues public education due largely in part to this evasion of social responsibility (Saltman, 2000).

Schools Turn to Commercialism



After depleting the tax base that funds public schooling, commercial interests then gained entry into the desperate schoolhouse in a climate of demand for accountability, and under the gloss of charity (Molnar, 2003).

Forms of Commercialism in Education

- **Corporate Sponsorship of School Programs and Activities**
- **Exclusive Agreements**
(Allowing marketers exclusivity rights for product or service to be sold on school or district grounds)
- **Incentive Programs**
(Using commercial products and/or services for as a reward system for academic achievement)
- **Appropriation of Space**
(Through which the naming rights or advertising space on school property is sold)
- **Corporately Sponsored Educational Materials**
- **Electronic Marketing**
(Using electronic media including radio, television and internet to reach students at school)
- **Privatization**
- **Fundraising**

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Appendix C

Oriana Parenti
CSUMB MAE Student
o_parenti@yahoo.com

Professors Whang, Harrower, Hughs, Laughlin,
Bynoe, Carter, Nares-Guzicki, Sleeter, and Meador

January 5, 2004

Dear MAE Professors:

Hello all, and happy New Year. I start 2004 with my capstone project, a paper and pencil survey on the topic of schoolhouse commercialism, followed by an optional discussion forum to be held at a later date for those who choose to complete the questionnaire.

I write this email with the hope that you may be able to facilitate this project by allowing me to present the project and the survey to volunteer participants in your classes. Attached is a copy of the survey.

I look forward to hearing from you with any responses or questions you may have. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Oriana Parenti

Appendix D

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Dr. Hughes has given me the opportunity to present my master's thesis to you, in order to gather and share information on the topic of schoolhouse commercialism. I am giving a survey with questions about experience with, and observations of corporate presence at public school/work sites, for those who choose to volunteer. Commercial interests on campus present themselves in the forms of sponsorship of programs and activities, exclusive agreements, incentive programs, appropriation of space, sponsored educational materials, electronic marketing, and fundraising. Survey volunteers are also invited to participate in a discussion forum on this topic, where they will receive free copies of *Rethinking Schools*, a publication for teachers and education activists.

I will analyze the survey results and tape recorded discussion forum for emerging trends and summary findings. These will be shared with forum participants as well as with public and nonprofit defenders of student and community interest, for the purposes of awareness and action. All participation is voluntary, and both the survey and the tape-recorded discussion forum will be anonymous. Findings will be coded to assure this. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Dr. Elizabeth Meador, my capstone professor, and Dr. Christine Sleeter, my thesis advisor, are advising me on this project, and I may discuss the data with them in order to guarantee the most appropriate management and development of this study. All data collected will be kept at my private home office.

Thank you very much for your time and contribution to this project.

Sincerely,
Oriana Parenti

Appendix E

Dear Professor Molnar,

I am writing to you from Monterey, California, where I have been working on a Master of Arts in Education at CSUMB with Dr. Christine Sleeter.

I am tremendously grateful to you and your colleagues for explaining schoolhouse commercialism to me and others through CACE and EPSL. My interest in your work is so great that it the focal point of my own master's thesis research. It is my intention to raise awareness of this trend and its causes, modes, and consequences, as well as actions taken to control its growth.

My concern has also been piqued by an odd exchange I had recently with the California Department of Education which after researching it and getting back to me, informed me that they have no record of the Milwaukee Principles for Corporate Involvement in the Schools. It had been my intention to get the date of its adoption, referred to in Giving Kids the Business and posted on the EPSL website.

I hope you may be able to give me some more information about the principles and their adoption by state superintendents of education. As a teacher, I had not known of them, and in my own research I have learned that my colleagues have not either. I see that the NPTA has posted the principles, unnamed, on its website, but I want to know what has become of them in California and the other states that are listed as adopting them.

Again, I am very thankful to you for your contribution and example. I look forward to gaining more information about the principles when you have the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Oriana Parenti

Appendix F

eps1mail@imap2.asu.edu wrote:

Oriana, you may find the Milwaukee Principles posted on the Commercialism in Education Research Unit web site (www.schoolcommercialism.org) They are listed under "guidelines." The date of the Milwaukee meeting that led to the principles, etc. is also posted there.

Best,

Alex

>

Appendix G

Title: No Record of the Milwaukee Principles According to CDE

Dear Professor Molnar,

Hello again. I am Christine Sleeter's student writing back to you from California. Thank you so much for your email (below).

My specific purpose in writing to you is to acquire updated information about the adoption of the Milwaukee Principles - beyond what is listed in your book and on your website. This is because the California Department of Education has no record of the Principles nor the adoption by the state superintendent. They are not referenced on the website, and after researching in at my request I was informed that they have no records of it. In your sources, I have not seen the year of adoption for the principles for any state. I am very curious about their current status in other states besides my own, when they were in fact adopted in California, and how they have come to be over-looked/lost.

I hope this email is not bringing sad news. Perhaps I am mistaken and you can correct or explain to me the reason for the confusing state of the principles' adoption in California. Regardless, thank you again for your time and attention, and of course also for your example.

Sincerely,
Oriana Parenti

California State University Monterey Bay
Master of Arts in Education

Appendix H



Academic interviewing displaced teachers about the socio-economic consequences of district cutbacks, lay-offs, and closures. Contact: displacedteachersunite@yahoo.com