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Assessing the Cultural Effects of Neoliberalism on Empathy

Melissa May Racho

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

ASSESSING THE CULTURAL EFFECTS OF
NEOLIBERALISM ON EMPATHY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of School Psychology
School Psychology

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This Dissertation by: Melissa May Racho

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ABSTRACT

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The current study examined the effect of neoliberalism on the expression of empathy among 40 undergraduate college students. Participants were divided across three groups: two treatment groups who were exposed to either a neoliberal or critical primer and a control group with no exposure to a primer. Individuals were randomly assigned to each condition prior to completing three empathy measures: The Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test. Mean scores were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and revealed no significant differences between groups, indicating the primers did not impact empathy scores. Similarly, demographic factors of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religious or political affiliation had no impact on empathy scores. The findings suggest that with this sample population, the cultural effects of neoliberalism did not negatively affect empathy. As these findings contradict a pattern of data present in two pilot studies that informed it, as well as other studies aimed at assessing the effects of discrete components of neoliberalism, further research is indicated.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has arrived at a significant cultural juxtaposition between our collective potential, driven by the most distinctive characteristics of human society, and a social devolution, driven by our complicit participation in a system whose neoliberal ideological basis may constrain our ability to empathize with others. The cultural characteristics promulgated by neoliberalism, namely hyper-individualism, commodification, and marketization, have influenced United States culture, institutions, and primary agents of socialization in such a way that the individual is constantly commoditized, shaped into a consumer and primarily focused on the self. Market ideology has been driven deep into our relationships with the world, others, and ourselves (Dardot & Laval, 2013). Subsequently, after 25 years of neoliberal policies, the state of things today regarding social interdependence and the individual is questionable. Despite the admirable march of progress that has also characterized the last quarter century, undoubtedly bringing improvements in the quality of life for millions, there has been a qualitative dissolution of our social connectedness and identity, which has, in turn, affected society and the individual in a myriad of detrimental ways (Pappano, 2001).

Negative outcomes within the United States are evident across a variety of domains in both public and personal life. The United States has, and continues to

experience, disengagement of our children from an educational system (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006; Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013; Natriello, 1984) within which they are viewed as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge rather than individuals rich with talent, capability, and their own knowledge to impart (Freire, 2012). Child neglect in the United States is up, with contact time with children declining significantly as a direct result of labor policies that place the market and profit over family (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Hewlett, 1993). Additional evidence of our precarious situation includes the unacceptable rates of suicide, depression, and anxiety among children, adolescents, and young adults (Perou et al., 2013), an increase in narcissism (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), the low self-esteem of our youth (McClure, Tanski, Kingsbury, Gerrard, & Sargent, 2010), and the general malaise and existential angst experienced by generations of individuals trying desperately to ignore it (Fitzgerald, 2005). Finally, and most notably for the purposes of this study, a recent meta-analysis exposed a significant decrease in dispositional empathy among American college students over the past three decades (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011).

Today, our children are born, grow up, and are expected to thrive within a culture that values profit, performance, output, and material possessions more so than individuals who have unique and respected attributes (Pappano, 2001). The messages promulgated by the zeitgeist of neoliberalism have matriculated from the economic to the personal. Hyper-individualism, market-ideology, consumerism, and commodification permeate the social landscape, each veiled in the socially appropriate packaging of the American values of individualism, self-reliance, and individual right. Because the rhetoric of these values is so ingrained in and coveted by our society—

akin to air we breathe—their expression seems more natural than it ought to. On the contrary, our species has relied heavily on social bonds for survival and, specifically, on empathy and the role it plays in social awareness as an essential component of our evolution (Carter, Harris, & Porges, 2009). Therefore, a systematic decrease in empathy must be investigated and addressed.

Significance of the Study

Research investigating the potential effects of neoliberalism on the individual's expression of empathy is highly important for a variety of reasons. First, given the previously described negative characteristics of United States culture today, a thorough understanding of the interplay between culture and empathy may lead to improved interventions across clinical and educational settings, providing effective means to mitigate future negative outcomes. As we strive towards a society that is more just, cooperative, and caring, empathy will be an integral part of the journey.

Literature has consistently shown strong correlations between high levels of empathy and the prosocial attitudes and behaviors that benefit both individuals and society (Kasser, 2003; Konrath et al., 2011). Individuals who score highly on empathetic measures tend to also be less lonely, more emotionally sensitive, have greater amounts of self-control, and spend more time volunteering (Konrath et al., 2011). Conversely, low levels of empathy have strong antisocial correlates, such as bullying, as well as violent and aggressive behaviors (Davis, 1983). Within educational settings, numerous positive psychosocial, emotional, and academic outcomes have resulted from the implementation of social and emotional learning programs (Babalís, Tsoli, Artikis, Mylonakou-Keke, & Xanthako, 2013; Elias et al., 1997; Jones, Brown, Hoglund, & Aber, 2010). This study and its findings may

facilitate increased support for the implementation of social and emotional learning programs within schools, in addition to providing greater understanding and increased discussion around other potential negative consequences present within a society where empathy has been seen to be decreasing, including potential biological and behavioral changes.

An intrinsic feature of the human brain is plasticity. Literature in both neuroscience and biology has shown that structural and functional changes occur within the brain as a direct result of the environment and that this malleability is the rule rather than the exception (Nishimura et al., 1999; Shaw & McEachern, 2001). The human brain can create functional and structural changes to accommodate an individual's specific experiences as well as to respond to environmental or cultural pressures (Burton, Synder, Diamond, & Raichle, 2002; Choudhury, 2009; Dominguez, Turner, Lewis, & Egan, 2009). Considering this research, this study considers as values of hyper-individualism, commodification, and market ideology continue to pervade the cultural landscape, what implications might there be in the genetic evolution of citizens in the United States? We know that something as seemingly elusive as a cultural value or characteristic can influence human behavior directly, as well as indirectly through affecting genetic phenotypes (Nishimura et al., 1999; Shaw & McEachern, 2001). For example, research has shown the occipital cortex, a brain region implicated in visual processing in sighted individuals, is activated and engaged during auditory processing in some blind individuals (Burton et al., 2002; Gougoux et al., 2009). Additionally, areas of the brain responsible for processing auditory information within hearing individuals are recruited for sign language for some individuals with auditory deficits (Nishimura et al., 1999). Therefore, it is plausible

that the cultural effects and characteristics of neoliberalism may be playing a role in the negative social characteristics elucidated by recent research.

Finally, with millions of people in the United States seeking therapy every year, each presenting with a unique but similar story and symptomatology, it is time to ask whether it is efficient and effective to continue to conceptualize and treat these disorders as discrete, individual problems and not at least in part, a result of a broader, more systemic cause. It is time for a critical review of the potential consequences of a culturally pervasive ideological structure that fuels commodification and the infiltration of market-logic into the most basic aspects of our lives, including our relationships to others, and specifically, our expressions of empathy.

Theoretical Basis

This study is unique in that it encompasses competing epistemological and theoretical perspectives as its basis for methodology and content, respectively. Where objectivism and positivism guided all methodological considerations with their assumptions that reality exists outside of experience and consciousness, and that social phenomena can be scientifically explored much the same way as the physical and natural, the content of this study encompassed critical theory, which holds opposing views of epistemology, theoretical orientation, and methodology.

Critical theory's epistemological stance is that reality is relative based upon one's unique position within a specific social structure situated within a specific period (Creswell, 2013). The individual's reality is a product of his or her power, privilege, experience of oppression, class, gender, mental abilities, and sexual orientation, for example (Creswell, 2013). Critical theory rejects experimental design with its focus on the relationship between variables and its goals of predicting,

controlling, and generalizing (Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2013). According to critical theorists, mainstream methodology is unable to address the complexity of how individuals relate to themselves and the world despite its controlled scientific efforts to explain and describe cause and effect (Fox et al., 2013). In contrast to the deductive process used by mainstream psychologists to test hypotheses, critical theory relies on abductive research that seeks to explicate, gain greater insight and understanding, and through a process, form an explanatory hypothesis (Fox et al., 2013). Its primary goal is to change oppressive systemic structures and emancipate and empower individuals towards a more just society, and though it uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to do this, every step of research is imbued with a critical spirit. Critical theory was chosen for use in this study solely as a theoretical framework through which to conceptualize the individual and society within the critical primer. It presents an alternative to the mainstream view of the structure of life in the United States and does not inform methodological considerations, nor does it in any way describe the mechanism of change proposed in this study.

The theoretical bases for the hypothesis that a priming agent, representative of a neoliberal cultural framework, will negatively influence participant expression of empathy included components of two theories to account for the complexity of the bidirectional nature of human behavior and emotion within a specific cultural context. Often used in research, priming can elicit a specific way of thinking or feeling (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000) and, subsequently, activating other, related concepts (Neely, 1977). In addition to the assumption that a priming agent, representative of a cultural phenomenon, can act as a mechanism of change in research, there are several theories

that support the hypothesis that culture can influence thought and the expression of emotion.

Theories drawn upon within this study include American sociologist Arlie Hochschild's social theory of emotion and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development. Together, these frameworks provided a theoretical basis for how a cultural concept such as neoliberalism is able to matriculate into the individual psyche, thereby affecting behavior and emotion or, more specifically, an expression of empathy.

Sociocultural Theory

Rooted in the tradition of Marx and Engel, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory holds that an individual's development and behavior does not occur, nor can they be understood, outside of one's social and cultural contexts (Ratner, 1991). Through the process of internalizing socially constructed systems of signs (e.g., language, images, art, advertising) and tools (e.g., computers, smart-phones, social media), developmental change is birthed, and early forms of human development are linked to later, more complex, and higher forms of development (Vygotsky, 1978). Each of these internalization processes represents the mechanism by which an individual acquires language, reasoning skills and abilities, attention, memory, and the ability to create ideas (Vygotsky, 1978).

In contrast to several leading developmental theorists who conceptualize development as occurring in discrete stages, Vygotsky views development through the lens of dialectical materialism, both as a life-long and dynamic process, embodied by continuous motion and change (Lourenco, 2012). Sociogenesis, within Vygotskian dialect, stresses the interdependence of social and individual processes, postulating

every function within an individual occurs twice in development, first in relation to another person or group, and once again within the individual (Lourenco, 2012). Where other theorists orient toward autonomous individuals, acting solitarily upon their environments to construct knowledge, sociocultural theory orients toward the heteronomous individual—one reliant upon social interactions, exchanges, and experiences to co-create knowledge (Lourenco, 2012). Learning, then, leads to development, and in like manner, language drives thought. “All higher psychological functions are internalized relationships of the social kind, and constitute the social structure of personality” (Valsiner, 1987, p. 67). In this way, culture and language facilitate and promote certain human behaviors, dependent upon which cultural signs and tools are internalized.

In the United States today, the individual is inundated with verbal and visual messages throughout the lifespan. Verbal signs and concepts are human beings’ primary cultural tools and play a dominant role in determining behavior (Bickley, 1977). We know that every word, for example, in addition to its explicit meaning has an implicit essence that embodies a social, economic, and historic component. What then, other than the explicit meaning presented by a particular word or symbol, is being assimilated into the self? Perhaps the spirit of neoliberalism and market ideology has promoted certain, less empathic behaviors more than others, as these cultural signs have been internalized.

Social Theory of Emotion

Hochschild’s social theory of emotion posits the existence of latent rules embedded within every society aimed at managing both the experience and expression of emotion, as well as the way individuals think about emotion (Hochschild, 1979).

The theory holds that social rules apply as much to emotional regulation as behavioral regulation (Hochschild, 1979), and that feelings, rather than arising as a direct result of certain events or circumstances, are mediated by both the norms within a particular society and constant, norm-referenced self-reflection (Tonkens, 2012). Hochschild (1979) coined the terms emotional labor, feeling and framing rules, and emotion management to further conceptualize and define these phenomena. Emotional labor is the effort an individual expends to feel or display a particular emotion (Tonkens, 2012). Framing rules are “the rules according to which we ascribe definition or meanings to situations” and include historical, practical, and moral types (Tonkens, 2012, p. 199). They refer to the cognitive component of emotion—the interpretation of an experience—and set the context and boundaries within which emotion will be experienced. An example within American culture is the idea that individuals are primarily responsible for the consequences of the choices and decisions they freely make and for their level of success in life. Feeling rules define what an individual “should” feel within in a particular society and within a certain situation, in addition to how strongly one should feel it and the acceptable duration of that feeling (Hochschild, 1979). Finally, emotion management is navigating and coping with framing and feeling rules.

According to Hochschild (1979), micro level framing and feeling rules matriculate from higher sources. At the macro level, individuals experience phenomena such as commodification and commercialization, each of which is espoused by particular institutions and or ideologies situated at the meso level of that culture (Tonkens, 2012) “Rules for managing feeling are implicit in any ideological stance; they are the bottom side of ideology” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 566). The

framework provided by Hochschild (1979) is particularly germane to this study as it highlights cultural ideology as a primary agent in the process of the individual's emotional experience. The hypothesis investigated in this study mirrored Hochschild's conceptualization. Neoliberal characteristics of commodification, market-ideology, and hyper-individualism have provided an ideological framework that has disseminated rules about how we think and feel about ourselves in relation to others; rules that have placed the self above others and society and has potentially had a pathogenic effect on the expression of empathy.

Synthesis of Relevant Literature

Previous research looking at decreased levels of empathy in the United States has focused on several potential causal factors. Some theorists attributed a shift in generational parenting style from one that is warm and responsive to one that is controlling and increasingly apathetic to aggressive tendencies in children (Konrath et al., 2011). Increases in personal technology and media consumption (Konrath et al., 2011) and increased exposure to violence in media have also been discussed as possible causes (Bushman & Anderson, 2009). Decreasing levels of empathy have also been attributed to rising rates of narcissism, which have, in turn, been accredited to an increased cultural emphasis on individualism (Twenge, 2006; Twenge et al., 2008).

Ample research has been conducted evaluating the economic consequences of neoliberalism on countries around the world, including the United States (Brown, 2006; Heynen, McCarthy, Prudham, & Robbins, 2007; Kahn, 2015; Passas, 2000; United Nations, 2009). Despite the economic gains, its policies have produced for some individuals, wherever neoliberal policies have been implemented to a marked

degree, inequality that has risen significantly (Steger & Roy, 2010). Much of the research on the social effects of neoliberalism was born of discussions of how this rising inequality has negatively affected individuals. Though for years theorists such as Foucault (2004/2008), Giroux (1981), and Gramsci (1971) have analyzed the effects that class and power structures have on citizenry, theoretical discussions about the effects of neoliberalism on empathy specifically are a recent endeavor with empirical studies emerging within roughly the past 5 to 10 years.

In their effort to understand the interpersonal and social consequences of priming individual choice, a component of the neoliberal framework, Savani, Stephens, and Markus (2011) found participants primed with the concept of individual choice differed in comparison to controls in that they showed reduced support for public policies that benefited society, increased support for expanding individuals' rights, higher levels of victim blaming, and reduced empathy for disadvantaged individuals. Notably, in the final study in this series, the effect of choice on empathy towards a disadvantaged child was assessed, with 26 European American and 47 Indian undergraduate student participants (Savani et al., 2011). Only American participants were influenced by the activation of choice and showed less empathy, indicating a culturally mediated response (Savani et al., 2011).

Several studies have looked at discrete characteristics of contemporary United States society, such as the consumerist or individualistic lifestyle, and without explicitly deeming them neoliberal (though some accurately fit the neoliberal framework), discussed them in relation to a decrease in empathy (Music, 2014). Others have looked at possible links between materialism—consumerism in the neoliberal dialect—and mental health, revealing high correlations between individuals

with a focus on extrinsic rather than intrinsic goals and emotional insecurity, unhappiness, and less caring attitudes (Kasser, 2003).

Throughout the last quarter of the 20th century, several individuals in the field of psychoanalysis have discussed aspects of neoliberalism in relation to the individual. Lasch (1979), Kovel, (1980), and Livesay (1985) used studies in narcissism to discuss and analyze possible links to late capitalism or neoliberalism before the term was widely used (Layton, 2014). In 2011, Binkley discussed both the relatively new discourse on happiness within the field of psychology and the burgeoning field of positive psychology as examples of neoliberal governmentality. He posits that each encourages narcissism and dissociation by discouraging dependency and interdependence through its focus on looking forward, optimism, and personal goals (Binkley, 2011). In 2014, Dr. Lynne Layton, supervisor and faculty member at Harvard Medical School, and co-editor of the journal *Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Society*, authored an article identifying narcissism, disavowal, and perversion as the primary psychological effects of neoliberalism.

Despite an intuitive capacity for empathy among humans, interpersonal separation and violence in the world remains on the rise. One of the primary investigators of answers to this quandary is Gary Olson, a professor in the political science department at Moravian College. In his seminal work, *Empathy Imperiled: Capitalism, Culture and the Brain*, he discussed the culmination of genes, brain, behavior, and culture holding today's corporate capitalism as playing an integral role in squelching the individual's ability to be empathic (Olson, 2013). He hypothesized,

The neoliberal ideology justifying free market capitalism is one of the most potent empathy bracketing-off elements of our culture, and hybrid cultural/neurobiological imprinting can override the neurobiological traits that

should bring people together. The dominant culture's social engineering undermines and attenuates both the acceptance and institutionalization of empathy on a grand scale, while channeling its expression toward system maintenance behaviors. (Olson, 2009, p. 1)

The social engineering referenced by Olson is the biocultural process by which culture plays a role in the regulation of emotion and emotional expression (Hochschild, 1979). Cross cultural differences in the way individuals think about perceived stimuli and in the way they react emotionally are highly attributable to cultural mediation (Chiao et al., 2009; Chiao et al., 2010). For example, in the United States, under its unique brand of corporate capitalism ushered in by neoliberal policies, the concept of care—the way we think about caring for others—has been privatized (Hochschild, 2003). The emotional needs of others are minimized in the trend toward rugged individualism, and one-to-one volunteer efforts are promoted as they safely treat only the symptoms of a social ill and not the source (Olson, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Although in the past 10 years there has been an influx in the number of studies aimed at assessing the effects or components of neoliberalism on the individual and society (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Hall & Lamont, 2013; Olson, 2013), none, to date, have attempted to empirically assess the cultural components of neoliberalism and its potential direct effects on empathy in an explicit and direct manner. Therefore, to address this gap in the literature, as well as inform our understanding of a potential piece of the root causes underlying a deterioration of empathy within the United States, this study investigated whether the cultural effects of neoliberalism, namely market ideology, commodification, and hyper-individualism, are negatively affecting the individual's expression of empathy.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- Q1 Do participants who have been exposed to primers detailing either neoliberal or critical cultural paradigms, and participants who have not been primed, have significantly different group-means on the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test?
- H1 Participants primed with neoliberalism will have lower group mean scores on the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index than participants primed with critical theory and control participants who were not primed.
- H2 Participants primed with neoliberalism will have lower group mean scores on the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test than participants primed with critical theory and control participants who were not primed.
- Q2 Does age moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who are younger will have greater mean empathy scores than those who are older when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers or no primer.
- Q3 Does gender moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who identify as female will have greater mean empathy scores than those who identify as males when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.
- Q4 Does ethnicity moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who identify as being from an ethnic minority will have greater mean empathy scores than those from a majority ethnic group when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.
- Q5 Does socioeconomic status, as indicated by level of parent education, moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants from a low socioeconomic status, as indicated by a parental level of education less than a bachelor's degree, will have greater mean empathy scores than those from a middle (bachelor's degree) or high

(post graduate degree) socioeconomic status when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.

- Q6 Does religious affiliation moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who identify with a religious affiliation will have greater mean empathy scores than those who do not affiliate with any when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.
- Q7 Does political affiliation moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who identify with a political affiliation will have greater mean empathy scores than those who do not identify with any when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers or no primer.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout, with the following intended definitions.

Commodification. The transformation of goods, ideas, and services, into objects of trade to include those items, which are not generally considered commercial items, such as education and human capital.

Critical theory. Theory which holds the primary means to human progress as emancipation and enlightenment, making people aware of hidden coercion and all forms of oppression, freeing them from that coercion, and putting them in a position where they are fully able to determine where their true interests lie (Geuss, 1981).

Empathy. The tendency to affectively react to another person's observed experiences or to a cognitive understanding and representation of another person's experience (Davis, 1983).

Hyper-individualism. The tendency to act in a manner that benefits the self without regard for or accountability to others, society, the world, or the environment.

Market ideology. An economic and transactional way of viewing something that focuses on efficiency and potential advantage. This economic paradigm can serve as a lens through which individuals view the self, relationships, others, and the world.

Neoliberalism.

A theory of political economy that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. (Harvey 2005, p. 2)

More broadly, neoliberalism will refer to an economic and political ideology, mode of governance, and form of public pedagogy that deems profit making as part of the essence of democracy, consuming as a primary action of citizenship, and believes that the market solves most problems and is adequate to serve as a model for structuring social relations (Giroux, 2014). It is important to note that some scholars do not view neoliberalism as an ideology (Becker, 1993a). For the purposes of, within the confines of this paper, and consistent with the ideas and beliefs of numerous other authors (Apple, 2004; Chomsky, 1998; Giroux, 2005; Jarosz, 2011), neoliberalism is deemed an ideology. The cultural components of neoliberalism referred to in this study include hyper-individualism, commodification, and market ideology. Though each of these is not unique to neoliberalism, together and with the other definitions, they offer a comprehensive account of the impact of sociocultural effects of neoliberalism within the United States.

Summary

Despite the vast amount of interconnectedness and potential improvements in quality of life afforded to the individual within the United States today because of advances made in the past 25 years, evidence of a dissolution of social interdependence is growing and has had numerous negative consequences on both society and the individual including an increase in narcissism (Twenge et al., 2008) and a decrease in empathy (Konrath et al., 2011). Hyper-individualism, commodification, and market ideology—the cultural effects of neoliberalism—have begun to mediate how individuals relate to themselves and the world around them. Though researchers and theorists alike have discussed these issues since the inception of neoliberalism in the late 1970s, none to date has empirically assessed the cultural effects of neoliberalism and what seems a systemic decrease in empathy.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Individuals and their behavior are inextricably linked to the social and cultural contexts within which they exist. Subsequently, to understand a change in the population's expression of empathy in the United States thoroughly over the past 25 years, a review of the dominant cultural ideology present within that period is necessary. This chapter explores the cultural effects of neoliberalism and critical theory on individual expressions of empathy.

Neoliberalism: A Brief History

Neoliberalism, as it presents within the United States today, is akin to the air we breathe. It is a way of existing and a way of interacting for entities as large as corporations to those as small as individuals. An intense decades-long focus on free markets, privatization, deregulation, and the belief that economic growth is the most important goal within the confines of our collective economic life has spilled into all other areas of our existence. That overlap with our various institutions has brought neoliberalism to the multifaceted entity that it is today—part economic framework, part political rationality and mode of governance, and part cultural ideology.

Born as a contemporary resurgence of classical liberalism, similarly, neoliberalism's most fundamental characteristic is a strong belief in the primacy of the self-regulating market. Like classical liberalism, neoliberalism also asserts free trade

and competition are the primary components needed to drive prosperity and economic growth (Baez, 2007). Despite the similarities, however, neoliberalism is qualitatively different from the classical liberalism in several important ways. Classical liberalism is an economic framework that provides economic prescriptions. In contrast, neoliberalism has expanded far beyond an economic paradigm. It has become a governing mechanism of such aspects of society as politics, education, prisons, and relationships (Baez, 2007). Unlike the economic framework provided by classical liberalism, personal and social relationships are today governed to a great extent by neoliberal ideas (Saunders, 2010), and everything has been made economic (Lemke, 2001).

In response to the fading post World War II golden age of capitalism, neoliberalism came to dominate the economic landscape of the United States in the early 1980s. Economists Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman blamed the undoing of capitalism that occurred in the years between 1945 and 1973 on the political application of Keynesian ideas in measures such as the Social Security Act, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, increased government intervention and spending, state ownership of certain national enterprises, and strengthened labor unions (Harvey, 2005). Keynesian economics asserts free market capitalism has no inherent self-balancing mechanism and views government intervention as a necessary force able to stabilize the economy (Jahan, Mahmud, & Papageorgiou, 2014). In opposition to the developmentalist model embodied by Keynesian economics, Friedman and his colleague, Arnold Harberger, elicited help from the United States State Department, the Ford Foundation, several large American corporations, and the University of Chicago to promote the inception of academic programs that would espouse free-

market, neoliberal principles throughout Latin America (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Programs were enacted in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and, notably, in Chile where a trained group of economic students, famously coined “The Chicago Boys,” played an integral role in the large-scale implementation of neoliberal policies abroad (Harvey, 2005).

On September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet, covertly supported by the United States government, initiated a successful military coup overthrowing Chilean President Salvadore Allende who had been democratically elected three years earlier and was a strong supporter of developmentalist economic policies (Kornbluh, 2003). Upon seizing the presidency, Pinochet adopted a 500 page economic plan drafted by The Chicago Boys which outlined a litany of advised neoliberal policies such as mass privatization and cuts in social spending, deregulation, and a reduction of tariffs (Steger & Roy, 2010). Rapid implementation of many of the recommended policies created mixed results over Pinochet’s 20-year rule, both stabilizing Chilean inflation and gross domestic product growth rate and significantly increasing wealth disparity, with the country’s richest 10% doubling their wealth, while lower and middle classes struggled (Steger & Roy, 2010). In addition to a neoliberal experiment, Pinochet’s military dictatorship was characterized by brutal political oppression and repeated violations of human rights (Kornbluh, 2003). Although Friedman and Hayek in no way condoned the violence perpetrated by Pinochet on the citizens of Chile, they did argue for his economic policies to be given a chance, predicting they would usher a return to democracy, prosperity, and freedom (Harvey, 2005). To date, Chile remains one of the top 15 countries leading the world in wealth disparity (Steger & Roy, 2010).

In tandem with the economic academic programs enacted by the United States in Latin America, the creation of the Washington Consensus furthered the spread of neoliberal policies abroad. Viewed by many as synonymous with neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus is a set of ten economic policy prescriptions embodying best practice for economic reform in developing countries (Williamson, 1989).

Washington-controlled international economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank imposed the implementation of neoliberal policies in exchange for much needed loans (Steger & Roy, 2010). The Washington Consensus program includes the following policies, as listed in Steger and Roy (2010):

1. A guarantee of fiscal discipline, and a curb to budget deficit
2. A reduction of public expenditure, particularly in the military and public administration
3. Tax reform, aiming at the creation of a system with a broad base and with effective enforcement
4. Financial liberalization, with interest rates determined by the market
5. Competitive exchange rates, to assist export-led growth
6. Trade liberalization, coupled with the abolition of import licensing and a reduction of tariffs
7. Promotion of foreign direct investment
8. Privatization of state enterprises, leading to efficient management and improved performance
9. Deregulation of the economy
10. Protection of property rights. (p. 19)

Many culminating factors led to the sharp decline of Keynesian economics in the late 1970s. Divisions between supporters were mounting, while the public continued to have a vague understanding of its key principles (Palley, 2005). The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' oil-shocks and the economic consequences that followed led citizens to question if there might be a better, more stable system. In the end, because of both economic and cultural factors, Keynesian economics had been fatally weakened and left no rival to neoliberalism and its

powerful supporters. The Keynesian ideal began to seem antithetical to the ideological conflict played out in the Cold War and the United States' aversion to anything related to socialism or communism (Palley, 2005).

The persuasive neoliberal rhetoric of the power of the free-market and the autonomy of the individual proved timely as the United States strategized to meet geopolitical demands to thwart socialist developmentalism in the third world and global communist sprawl (Steger & Roy, 2010). With economic progress being reported in Latin America as neoliberal policies were exacted, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher brought the first wave of neoliberalism to the forefront of the western world with their dissemination of "Reagonomics" and "Thatcherism," respectively (Steger & Roy, 2005).

Upon taking presidential office in 1980, Ronald Reagan, with then Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, as an advisor, promptly implemented a litany of supply-side economic policies, as well as their supportive, political counterparts. He strategically placed supporters of neoliberal policies in positions of power to affect occupational safety, environmental regulation, and health policies (Harvey, 2005). He deregulated the airlines, telecommunication, and finance sectors; gave tax breaks to corporations; attacked trade unions; and implemented the deindustrialization of United States manufacturing (Harvey, 2005). Within a decade, the American worker had less power, the federal minimum wage was 30% below the poverty line, and the concept of a social safety net had been severely weakened (Harvey, 2005). Simultaneously, in the United Kingdom, Thatcherism was taking hold and similar policies were being implemented. Prime Minister Thatcher embodied the pervasive neoliberal agenda best

in two infamous statements: “Economics are the method, the object is to change the soul” (Butt, 1981, p. 14) and “There is no such thing as society” (Keay, 1987, p. 9).

Beginning with Reagan’s significant slimming of the government, each subsequent United States president has continued the implementation of a variety of neoliberal policies. George Bush spearheaded, promoted, and signed into existence the North American Free Trade Agreement and controlled government spending during a recession. Bill Clinton began what has been coined the second wave of neoliberalism (Steger & Roy, 2010). He signed the Personal Responsibility and Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, a considerable welfare reform bill, as well as the Bipartisan Budget Agreement in 1997 (Meeropol, 1998) which reduced spending by \$160 billion, most of which came from Medicaid and Medicare (American Hospital Association, 2000). George W. Bush implemented numerous neoliberal policies. His efforts to privatize Social Security or, as conceptualized by Sargis and Gabbard (2005), to exchange social security for market security were starkly neoliberal. The No Child Left Behind Act, signed in 2001, brought business-like practices such as high-stakes testing and performance-based wages into the educational system (Ball, 2009). In 2009, Barack Obama’s Race to the Top continued the tradition of neoliberal educational policies. Additionally, upon taking office, President Obama appointed Robert Rubin, Lawrence Summers, Paul Volcker, and Timothy Geithner as advisors, each of whom has been thoroughly associated professionally with neoliberal economic policies (Toussaint & Munevar, 2011).

The election of Donald Trump has brought neoliberalism to the forefront of political discourse, as many believe it, and/or its failures paved the way to his victory (Bush, 2017). Although it is far too early to determine whether the Trump presidency

will embrace and promulgate neoliberal policies to the degree Trump businesses and brands have (Jonsson & Baeten, 2014), several early supported policies provide evidence it may. School voucher programs bring competition and choice into the educational system in the hopes of ushering in systemic improvements. His focus on smaller government, extensive tax cuts, mass privatization, and less government spending on social programs are characteristic of neoliberalism despite his staunch nationalism (Bush, 2017).

The increasing presence and power of neoliberal economic policies brought with it a concomitant shift of governance in the United States and the rise of neoliberalism as a political rationality (Baltodano, 2012). French philosopher, Michel Foucault (2004/2008) described that from a political rationality, neoliberalism then grew into an ideological apparatus that transformed the nature of the state and what it means to be a citizen, as well as created a new set of mores, subjectivities, moralities, desires, and behaviors. A previously economic endeavor had become a form of governmentality; that is, it became a way for the state to wield control over its citizens (Foucault, 2004/2008). Throughout the past 30 years, the state's identity has shifted from protector of its citizens to protector of capital (Brown, 2003). Any commitment to social justice and equality, as was evident in the post-war welfare state, has been replaced by its current primary function—to enact policies that protect the market (Brown, 2003). “Government practices have been reduced to the same calculating equations of profitability and cost-efficiency benefits” (Baltodano, 2012, p. 493).

Neoliberalism: Cultural Effects

As the neoliberal hegemony increasingly shaped individuals' common sense, commodification, commercialization, and marketization, as well as the extension of market logic and the prioritization of economic outcomes, have

come to redefine the purpose and role of social, cultural, and political institutions. (Saunders, 2010, p. 42)

Beyond a strictly economic and political ideology presenting modes of operation for governance and foreign and domestic policies, neoliberalism has expanded into a cultural framework presenting modes of operation for the individual's relationship to education, work, their family, to others, and themselves. Today's brand of capitalist market ideology, with its lionization of autonomy, self-interest, and freedom has matriculated into the fabric of how human beings relate to one another, themselves, and the world.

Concomitant to the shifts in the roles and functions of government, what it means to be an American citizen has taken on a qualitative change as well. Today, the individual is seen as homo economicus, an economic agent, consistently self-interested, self-sufficient, and rational, and all areas of life, including the political, work, cultural, social, and personal are assessed, evaluated, and in essence, diminished by the economic principles of cost-benefit analyses, production, and efficiency (Brown, 2003). Gary Becker, the American economist who was for many years a professor of economics and sociology at the University of Chicago, posited that the "economic approach to human behavior provides a valuable unified framework for understanding *all* human behavior" (Becker, 1976, p. 14). He also wrote extensively on the concept of human capital, likening one's acquisition of education, training, and skills and characteristics such as punctuality and honesty to business investments in equipment, in that each will yield income and other useful output over time (Becker, 1993a). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu conceptualized education as an institutional component of what he called cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition to the

concept of branding one's self, or viewing the self as a form of capital, the cultural effects of neoliberalism include a false sense of individual freedom.

Despite the managed routine in which citizens exist within society today, most neoliberal citizens understand themselves to be free (Baltodano, 2012).

Neoliberalism functions at the level of the subject, producing docile subjects who are tightly governed, and who, at the same time define themselves as free. Individuals, we suggest, have been seduced by their own perceived powers of freedom and have, at the same time, let go significant collective power, through, for example, allowing the erosion of union power. (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 249)

This perception of power and freedom may come from the neoliberal rhetoric that the ability to make choices is the essence of autonomy (Avsar, 2008), and in the consumer culture that is the United States, choice for most is abundant.

The ability to make choices is a strong component of feeling in control, free and autonomous, and has several positive consequences for an individual's wellbeing (Savani et al., 2011). There are, however, some negative consequences of choice as demonstrated by Savani et al. (2011). Participants were asked to view a six-minute video of a man performing a series of tasks such as opening mail, eating chocolate, and reading magazines. Experimental group participants were asked to press the space bar whenever they witnessed the man making a choice, while control group participants were asked to press the space bar whenever the man touched something with his hands for the first time. All participants were then asked four questions about affirmative action. Results showed participants for whom the concept of choice had been activated, showed reduced support for affirmative action than did controls (Savani et al., 2011). In subsequent studies in the same investigation, activation of choice led to reduced support for public policies that benefited society in contrast to

increased support for those expanding individuals' rights, higher levels of victim blaming, and reduced empathy for an individual who was disadvantaged (Savani et al., 2011). The final study in this series in which the effects of choice on empathy towards a disadvantaged child were assessed, only participants from the United States were affected by the activation of choice and showed less empathy (Savani et al., 2011). Indian participants presented no differences in empathy between experimental and control groups, indicating the effect of choice on empathy might be culturally specific (Savani et al., 2011). As Americans showed less empathy than Indian participants in situations where individual choice was activated, there may be something about the culture of the United States that creates a situation where individuals are primed by choice in a way that makes them less empathic and that, despite the caste system and immense wealth disparity present in India and familiar to Indian participants, the effects of choice do not elicit a decrease in empathy among Indian participants.

As the normative features of neoliberalism, namely self-reliance, autonomy, and hyper-individualism have begun to characterize the individual, a series of broad social consequences has developed, including an aversion to welfare and collectivism and the separation of economic activity from any sense of social responsibility (Bone, 2012).

By systematically dismantling the formal and informal framework of regulations that governed and restrained businesses in the pre-neoliberal era, contemporary policy-makers have created conditions that de-socialize both business practice and the very conscious of its practitioners. Moreover, the increasingly dominant normative values and regulatory flexibility of contemporary business have permeated the common sense world-view. Where hard-nosed and cavalier "entrepreneur" has been raised to iconic status, this shift can arguably be seen to have exerted a corrosive influence on our societal structure as a whole. (Bone, 2012, p. 653)

The effects of neoliberalism have coalesced to undermine a genuine sense of social connectedness, civility, and empathy under the auspices of a socioeconomic milieu with little to no conscience.

Neoliberalism: Effects on Education

In tandem with the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, a shift began in the United States educational system. By adopting neoliberal policies and practices, the United States educational system has begun to function as a business rather than an educational institution driven by a human-centered purpose, and education has begun to be viewed as a private right rather than a public good (Giroux, 2011). Today, the dominant educational paradigm assumes pedagogy is a set of strategies and skills to use to teach prespecified subject matter and is directly linked to outcomes (Giroux, 2013). Knowledge and instruction within our culture have been commoditized (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Both students and teachers are held to standards that, if unmet, have serious personal, social, economic, and cultural consequences.

Historically, there have been a wide variety of human institutions, religious, political, or otherwise, that have existed to serve the political or economic elite. Marxists and Neo-Marxist theorists hold that the educational system within the United States is one such institution whose role has been to culturally reproduce the dominant capitalist culture and has been since its inception (Sarup, 2012). Immediately following the Revolutionary War, to create a national identity and establish a government based upon representation and popular rule, “great significance was attached to education as an instrument of political socialization” (Rury, 2009, p. 54). As the economy of the United States began to flourish in the late 19th century, the

formal, state-supervised educational system expanded and improved (Rury, 2009).

“Like most forward thinking Americans of their day, school leaders were impressed by the power and efficiency of early factories, and lauded the virtues of a disciplined and orderly workforce” (Rury, 2009, p. 55). Education was seen as a mechanism both to educate the citizenry of this budding nation in the political manner so desired, as well as socialize the citizenry for participation in its burgeoning economic system. Subsequently, a symbiotic union between formal schooling and the nation’s economic interests was formed.

In 1918, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education drafted the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (Kliebard, 2002), a report whose aim was to standardize education and “shift from the idea of universal education (which included abstract thinking), to a moralistic, separatist curriculum” (Kramer, 2010, p. 17). A key contributor to this report was Alexander James Inglis (1918/2012), whose seminal work *Principles of Secondary Education*, greatly influenced early 20th-century educational reform, highlighting six primary functions of secondary education (Kramer, 2010). Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to outline and discuss all six functions, each function presents evidence of the predetermined socializing role formal education in the United States would take. Two functions particularly relevant include the “integrating function,” aimed at creating conformity, or the “development of like-mindedness, of unity of thought, habits, ideals and standards, requisite for social cohesion” (Inglis, 1918/2012, p. 377) and the selective function, which eliminates those individuals unable to complete tasks in the required manner (Inglis, 1918/2012). As he discussed the preparatory role of education in democracy, Inglis (1918/2012) wrote,

The American democracy depends for its existence and success on the social consciousness and social cooperation of its citizens. Unless the school can make a significant contribution to the development of social consciousness and social cooperation it must fail in one of its most important purposes. In the endeavor to make that contribution great responsibility must rest on the secondary school wherein is trained that somewhat select group of individuals who must ultimately exert the greatest influence on our social and civic life. (p. 719)

Today, because of this increasingly archaic economic underpinning, the United States educational system continues to prop up existing economic and social structures in two primary ways. First and rather explicitly, studies suggest these structures are promulgated through the content of the curriculum provided to students via inaccurate or biased information within textbooks (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999). For example, one study evaluated how leading United States college-level textbooks on government and democracy presented Native American issues and found grave mistreatment of this population (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999). Not only was there proportionately less information written about Native Americans relative to other minority groups, much of the information was deemed biased and superficial (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999). Systemic misrepresentations of minority populations (Native Americans in this example) perpetuate existing social and economic structures by simplifying complex phenomena, thereby creating stereotypes. Categorization of a certain population can lead to negative policy outcomes (Ashley & Jarratt-Ziemski, 1999) that can promote the status quo.

In addition to the explicit ways dominant ideology and culture is reproduced, and in a much more insidious manner, elite political and economic structures are being supported and advanced within our educational system through what Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (2011) refer to as correspondence theory. According to

correspondence theory, the dynamics present within work environments are replicated via the atmosphere and culture of schools and are subsequently teaching societal roles and the submissive characteristics deemed attractive to employers in addition to the curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Examples of this include representing the hierarchy between employers and employees with that of the relationship between administrators and teachers and then teachers and students. Students earn external rewards (i.e., grades) for their work rather than being intrinsically motivated and have very little, if any, say regarding what they are learning in a manner that mimics the capitalist workplace where workers are motivated by a paycheck and are alienated from the product of their labor (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Anyon (1980) discovered significant differences in both the type of work assigned and nature of teacher–student relationships in schools representing different socioeconomic status (e.g., working class, middle class, affluent/professional, and executive/elite). Students from working class schools were assigned and engaged in procedural work and rote learning (Anyon, 1980). They were told to follow certain steps to find an answer and had little to no opportunity to make choices or to be creative (Anyon, 1980). In contrast, students from the executive/elite schools were encouraged to solve problems on their own using reason and creativity and had expanded choice (Anyon, 1980). According to Anyon, the differences in the nature of student work and relationships to the teacher are a result of the inherent differences in their respective social class’s relation to authority, capital, and productivity.

The way knowledge and education are structured within Western, capitalist culture has profound effects on our educational system and subsequently on how students identify themselves, not only as learners within the school system, but also as

individuals within society. The characteristics and subsequent implications of this model, which are contradictory to holistic human development, are alienating scores of children by siphoning their creativity and preventing many of them from discovering and embracing their true potential (Robinson, 2001).

The international shift within the past 25 years towards standardized testing and, most recently, the invention of value-added measures are evidence of business models and paradigms being implemented within the educational system (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Testing is useful for a variety of reasons but can have adverse consequences. The concept of being able to quantify the value of knowledge has led to a pedagogical approach within which teachers are the depositors or subjects of knowledge and education, while students are merely objects or bystanders in their own educational journey (Freire, 2012). This reality of our educational system today was coined “banking education” by Paulo Freire (2012) in his classic piece, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. As a result, a culture of compliance is created and curiosity or imagination is squelched (Azzam, 2009).

A longitudinal study was conducted within which 1,600 kindergarten children were administered an assessment of divergent thinking, a fundamental aspect of the creative process (Land & Jarman, 1998). Divergent thinking often involves thinking in analogies or in metaphors and being able to see as many patterns of possibility (Vidal, 2013). Land and Jarman (1998) wanted to explore the effects of the educational system on a child’s capacity for divergent thinking over time, with increased exposure to the system. Upon first administration, 98% of the children obtained scores high enough to be classified creative genius. Five years later, at ages 8 to 10, 32% scored at the genius level. At final administration, ages 13 to 15, only 10% scored at this level.

Given the same assessment, only 2% of 200,000 adults (all over 25) scored high enough to be classified as a creative genius. The outcome of this study seemed to imply that all humans are born with immense creativity, and as individuals grow and become educated via our current system, this creativity leaves us (Land & Jarman, 1998).

Small children are experimental and creative actors. The socialization process in modern societies both at home and at educational institutions, does not enhance and develop their creativity. On the contrary, their creativity is discouraged in many ways. (Vidal, 2013, p. 237)

Evidence of this alienation can be seen in part through graduation and dropout rates that continue to be greater among students from minority backgrounds. Despite that United States public high school graduation rates for the 2013-2014 school year reached an all-time high of 82% (Kamenetz, 2015), graduation rates in the 50 largest cities in the United States, with the highest number of Black and Latino students, still average 53% (Swanson, 2009).

In sum, over the past 25 years, neoliberalism, beginning as an economic paradigm, has expanded to influence most aspects of life for those in the United States, including work, educational institutions, and relationships. Although neoliberalism has gained ideological status and pervades much of our social, professional, and personal environments, other ways of thinking about our relationships, our lives, and our selves do exist, though they may prove difficult to discover in today's cultural landscape.

Critical Theory: A Brief History

Broadly speaking, critical theory is a school of thought that aims to critique society and culture in an effort to elicit systemic, transformative change. In contrast to

theories stemming from positivist and post-positivist frameworks that are directed toward understanding and describing the world as it is, critical theory is oriented towards how things might or should be (Bronner, 2011). Though the term now encompasses a broad meaning and spans a wide variety of disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, education, literature, and psychology, critical theory in the narrowest and original sense refers to a theory born of the Western European Marxist tradition by a group of German philosophers in the 1930s.

Created by Max Horkheimer and his colleagues, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Jurgen Habermas, at the Frankfurt school in Germany, critical theory was conceived to analyze Marx's erroneous prediction of a Western revolution, as well as the rise of Stalinism and fascism in Soviet Russia and Germany, respectively (Bohman, 2015). Like Marx, critical theorists are concerned with examining the superstructure of society, including the state, culture, institutions, power structures, roles, and rituals. However, critical theory parts with Marxism in several fundamental ways. It is less concerned with the base or forces and relations of production and divisions of labor than is Marx (Bronner, 2011). It dismisses economic determinism, rejecting Marx's theory that economic forces shape and determine all other aspects of a civilization (Fleischer, 1973) and stresses the critical method over systematic claims made by Marxism (Bronner, 2011).

Taking the full human into consideration, critical theory challenges establishmentarian philosophies, dominant ideas, beliefs, worldviews, and ways of operating that are generally taken for granted by the individual and are often oppressive (Malott, 2011). Its aim is to "liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244) to illuminate the ways exploitation,

repression, and alienation are embedded in Western civilization, thereby providing the intellectual basis for revolutionary action (Bronner, 2011). According to critical theory, phenomenology, and positivism, with their ahistorical conceptualizations of society and their aversion to genuine subjectivity, are two primary obstacles to a liberated society (Bronner, 2011). Each is establishmentarian, “phenomenology with its set ontological claims about how individuals experience existence, and positivism, with its demand that society be analyzed according the criteria of the natural sciences” (Bronner, 2011, p. 4). Critical theory presents itself as an alternative that focuses on several key concepts.

Ideas and concepts of alienation, reification, instrumental rationality, and the culture industry dominate critical thought, each playing a role in sustaining systemic oppression. Alienation, as defined by Marx, is a deep estrangement from one’s self and the world that comes from the separation of man from both his work and a sense of agency (Fromm, 1961). Alienation comes from the division of labor—when an individual’s work is no longer an expression of his or her power (Fromm, 1961). It is essentially the psychological consequence of an individual being made a mechanistic piece of society. Similarly, reification is a specific form of alienation where, within a society saturated with commodification, the self and relationships are treated instrumentally as things (Burriss, 1988). Within modern capitalism, reification is a “necessary illusion—both accurately reflecting the reality of the capitalist exchange process and hindering its cognitive penetration” (Held, 1980, p. 22).

Instrumental rationality is a form of rationality wherein one identifies a problem and moves towards its solution in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible with no assessment of the value of the end (Kolodny & Brunero,

2015). Expressions of instrumental rationality include capitalism, bureaucracy, and science (Bronner, 2011). Finally, Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/2002) conceptualized the term and concept culture industry in their seminal work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which refers to the systematic fabrication of needs which are then supplied or fulfilled by the same system from which that need was created in order to pacify individuals and society (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002).

Although the culture industry speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. (Adorno, 1975, p. 12)

According to the culture industry concept, the production of cultural content is political and for the economic goal. If individuals are focused on constantly consuming, little time, energy and concern will be left for authenticity or for commenting on the systemic forms of oppression.

Despite not being explicitly identified until the early 20th century, critical theory's intellectual lineage can be seen throughout history. The pre-Socratic teachings of Heraclitus captured the essence of critical theory in his declaration of the existence of many real things, each of which is constantly in the process of becoming or changing. Heraclitus believed that everything known is known through experience, and that there are no universals, each a very critical conceptualization of reality. Socrates exhibited a critical nature, consistently calling conventional wisdom and long-standing beliefs into question and placing them under scrutiny (Bronner, 2011). Baruch Spinoza believed most of man's thought was false consciousness, consisting of ideology and rationalization (Fromm, 1961), while Immanuel Kant's, *Critique of Pure Reason*, held that moral autonomy was the individual's highest value (Bronner, 2011).

Friedrich Hegel stressed an internal “examination of the sources of deception, illusion and distortion that the mind undergoes in its journey to Absolute Knowledge” (Smith, 1987, p. 99). According to Hegel, this internal act is the start of the individual’s liberation from external sources of oppression (Smith, 1987). Finally, Freud’s theory of repression is critical, conceptualizing the nature of the interplay between the individual and society as antagonistic (Malott, 2011). Repression, as was characterized by Freud, is the concept that “in an oppressive society that demands obedience in work and other relationships, certain natural human drives and desires, such as creative and free use of language, are subjugated” (Malott, 2011, p. 43). Today, as was previously noted, critical theory and its theorists are present in a wide variety of disciplines, though outside of social and political philosophy, that presence is quite limited.

Critical Pedagogy

Freire’s (2012) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* brought critical and pedagogical ideas together in such a way as to usher into existence the discipline of critical pedagogy. According to critical theory, one of the primary means to human progress is emancipation and enlightenment, to make the individual aware of hidden oppression and coercion and to then facilitate a reclaimed sense of agency (Geuss, 1981). Critical education is an essential part of this process and an integral part of building and sustaining a more just society (Freire, 2013). Education is the practice of freedom; it is the way in which individuals critically discover authentic reality and realize how to transform their world in ways that seek and uphold social justice (Freire, 2013). According to critical theorist Henry Giroux (2003),

The fundamental challenge of schools is to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and authority they need to inquire and act upon what it means to live in a multicultural democracy, to recognize anti-democratic forms of

power, and to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systemic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities. (p. 176)

Rather than serving a critical, emancipatory role in society, critical theorists assert the public and higher educational systems within the United States are complicit in perpetuating current economic, political, and social structures, as are many of the professional disciplines for which they prepare individuals.

Critical Psychology

Critical theory is scarcely present within the field of mainstream psychology. The American Psychological Association has no division or journals devoted to its study or practice, and although trace elements may be present in American Psychological Association accredited clinical, counseling, and school psychology doctoral programs, in the form of feminist theory, counseling courses, or an occasional article, critical theory is rarely if ever explicitly described or taught. There are, of course, many reasons for the absence of the critical tradition in mainstream psychology, most of which center on critical theory's rejection of the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical bases upon which mainstream psychology rests and mainstream psychology's methodological commitment to empirical, deductive methods (Fox et al., 2013). Critical theorists believe mainstream psychology's overemphasis on the individual, "underlying assumptions and institutional allegiances disproportionately hurt members of powerless and marginalized groups by facilitating inequality and oppression" (Fox et al., 2013, p. 5). Certainly, there are psychologists doing work that would be deemed critical, and areas within mainstream psychology such as social or community psychology that come close. However, these instances are rare and critical theorists assert that despite the good intentions of many clinicians,

unacceptable, negative outcomes persist because of the practices of mainstream psychology in the United States (Fox et al., 2013).

Critical Theory: Rationale for Use

Critical theory was chosen as the competing perspective to neoliberalism due to its antithetical nature and conceptualizations of the individual and society as compared to neoliberalism. Whereas the primary goal of neoliberalism is economic growth, the primary goal of critical theory is human emancipation and a liberated society. While neoliberalism aims to produce citizens who are efficient consumers, rationally pursuing their self-interest, and detached from a sense of social responsibility, critical theory aims to produce citizens who are “critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way” (Giroux, 2011, p. 3). Additionally, critical theory has historically held a pushback presence in areas where neoliberal policies elicited new radical protest movements and resistance to imperialism (Held, 1980). It presents a more humane alternative view of the individual and society than does the mainstream neoliberal view, which is seemingly devoid of empathy.

Empathy

The human brain has several characteristics that make it uniquely human. The most extraordinary of these is the evolutionary way in which our brains are wired and able to connect with others emotionally and mentally; this characteristic is referred to as the social brain. Although there remains great debate regarding the specific neural underpinnings of the social aspects of the brain, certain structural areas or brain systems have been almost entirely agreed upon as implicated in some of these social processes, including the amygdala, the mirror neuron system, and the superior

temporal sulcus (Adolphs, 2009; Stone & Gerrans, 2006). The concept of the social brain encompasses how individuals make sense of and understand other individuals and groups, how they relate to them, and how they understand themselves in light of others (Adolphs, 2009). The phenomenon accounts for tasks as specific as recognizing faces, to those as broad as making social judgments (Adolphs, 2009), developing theory of mind, and experiencing empathy (Adolphs, 2009).

Although empathy as a human experience has a vast evolutionary history, the term itself, and the empirical study of the construct has existed for roughly a century (Batson, 2011). In that relatively short time, a wide variety of definitions and phenomena both related to and distinct from empathy have emerged in the attempt to explain and understand better this complex human construct (Batson, 2011). Subsequently, and due to the interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature of empathy, a single and clear definition does not yet exist. Many within the field of psychotherapy stress the behavioral nature of empathy and its importance in the therapeutic relationship as a component of the mechanism of change (Bozarth, 2011; Clark, 2013). While some theorists view empathy as a primarily affective construct (Batson, 1987; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987), others stress its cognitive aspects, such as how it is one imagines what another is thinking or feeling (Borke, 1971; Deutsch & Madle, 1975). In this way, empathy is intimately linked to theory of mind.

Empathy and Theory of Mind

The theory of mind is one of the most significant manifestations of the human social brain and encompasses an individual's ability to accurately decipher another person's beliefs, feelings, knowledge, and intentions (mental states) by way of observing behavior (Stone & Gerrans, 2006). Like empathy, theory of mind "involves

both the reasoning about others' mental and affective states" (Kanske, Bockler, Trautwein, & Singer, 2015, p. 15). Literature suggests some amount of overlap in the neural substrates of theory of mind and empathy, as the amygdala and the mirror neuron system are each indicated in both theory of mind (Adolphs, 2009) and empathic processes (Decety, Norman, Berntson, & Cacioppo, 2012; Iacoboni, 2012). Functional magnetic resonance imaging studies point to amygdala activation when viewing the facial expressions of other people and identifying their emotions from these expressions (Adolphs, 2009). First discovered in the brains of monkeys, mirror neurons are a specific type of visuomotor neuron that fires both when performing a task and while observing that same task being performed by another person (or monkey). Mirror neurons have been implicated as present in the human brain and are considered to be the foundational and innate neural substrate for motor imitation and such higher level or later developing processes as mentalizing and theory of mind, both essential aspects of our social brain (Siegal & Varley, 2002).

Empathy and theory of mind each depend upon the individual's ability to differentiate between self and other (Lamm, Batson, & Decety, 2007). Research assessing theory of mind has shown extremely young infants (some less than an hour old) are able to successfully imitate faces made by adults (Meltzoff & Decety, 2003). The implication is that infants, in a very rudimentary but real sense, can map the behavior of others onto themselves (Meltzoff & Decety, 2003). These findings provide evidence of a common coding between both action and perception of that action at the neural level and that this ability is innate and not a result of learning by association. This phenomenon is one of the first representations of the ability to discriminate between the self and the other, and understanding the self–other relationship via the

mirror neuron system—each of which are components of both empathy and theory of mind. Although indirect, there has been some research supporting the relationship between mirror neuron system and empathy (Schulte-Ruther, 2008). Functional magnetic resonance imaging research has identified greater activation in brain regions, in women relative to men, in brain areas containing mirror neurons during both self- and other-related tasks assessing the brain networks involved in empathy. Despite the gender differences evident in degree of activation, differentiated activation of those brain regions containing mirror neurons was present in both male and females (Schulte-Ruther, 2008).

In addition to functional magnetic resonance imaging, emotion recognition tasks such as The Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plum, 2001) and the Geneva Emotion Recognition Test (Schlegel, Grandjean, & Scherer, 2014) have been utilized as implicit performance tasks to measure theory of mind. In each of these tasks, participants are asked to recognize another individual's emotions based upon observations of only the eyes in the case of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test and face, voice, and body in the case of the Geneva Emotion Recognition Test. These emotion recognition tests are also commonly utilized to supplement self-report measures when assessing empathy (Olderbak, Sassenrath, Keller, & Wilhelm, 2014).

Mirroring the differences in its conceptualization, efforts to measure empathy have varied greatly and include self-report questionnaires that focus on either cognitive or affective aspects, such as Hogan's Empathy Scale and the Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy, respectively (Hogan, 1969; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Several prominent and recent studies have used Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity

Index as a means of conceptualizing and defining of empathy, as it presents a more holistic representation, combining both affective and cognitive aspects (Konrath et al., 2011). For the purposes of this study and because of its prolific use in a host of other empirical studies, Davis' (1983) definition of dispositional empathy will be utilized: "the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another" (p. 113).

A study published in 2011 used cross-temporal meta-analysis to examine possible trends in empathy between 1979 and 2009 within the United States (Konrath et al., 2011). Researchers analyzed data from 72 samples of college students who had been administered at least one subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index during that period. Results showed American students scored significantly lower on both the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales over time. The study calculated a 48% and 34% decrease in Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscale scores, respectively, from 1979 to 2009 (Konrath et al., 2011). Given these findings and the systemic political and cultural changes toward a neoliberal paradigm that occurred within the same period, this study aimed to assess whether one has influenced the other.

Neoliberalism and Empathy

Although we now know humans are hard-wired for social connectedness, literature has shown that despite the physiological presence of certain brain structures and neural substrates, individuals remain vulnerable to the effects of culture mediating changes in the brain (Han et al., 2013; Kitayama & Park, 2010). As neoliberalism has encouraged a culture-driven expression of emotion (Olson, 2013), the commodification of the individual, and extreme "me-first" thinking, these cultural values may have provided the impetus for behavioral and physiological changes.

Much of the research on the social effects of neoliberalism has been born of discussions about its economic consequences and through research assessing neoliberalism. Although the effects of economic, political, and social power structures on the individual have been analyzed for years (Foucault, 2004/2008; Giroux, 1981; Gramsci, 1971), theoretical discussions about and research assessing the potential effects of neoliberalism on the individual are a relatively recent endeavor, with empirical studies emerging only within roughly the past 5 to 10 years.

Most of what we have seen is studies aimed at assessing discrete components of neoliberalism without explicitly identifying them as neoliberal (Kasser, 2003; Music, 2014). As noted earlier, Savani et al. (2011) conducted a study aimed at better understanding the interpersonal and social consequences of priming individual choice, a component of neoliberalism. They found participants primed with the concept of individual choice differed in comparison to controls, showing reduced support for public policies that benefited society, increased support for expanding individuals' rights, higher levels of victim blaming, and reduced empathy for disadvantaged individuals (Savani et al., 2011). Additionally, they discovered the effect of choice on empathy in their study was culturally mediated. The activation of choice influenced only American participants, who showed less empathy towards a disadvantaged child after having been primed with individual choice (Savani et al., 2011).

In 2014, Music discussed the United States' consumerist and individualistic lifestyles in relation to a decrease in empathy. Another study assessed the possible links between materialism—consumerism in the neoliberal dialect—and mental health, revealing high correlations between a focus on extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic goals and emotional insecurity, unhappiness, and less caring attitudes (Kasser, 2003).

For years, theorists within the field of psychoanalysis have discussed the narcissistic tendencies within the individual having emerged because of neoliberalism (Kovel, 1980; Lasch, 1979; Livesay, 1985). More recently, Binkley (as cited in Layton, 2014) described the burgeoning field of positive psychology and the relatively new discourse on happiness within the field of psychology as examples of neoliberal governmentality. He asserted that in each,

Subjects are dissuaded from introspecting, dwelling on problems, or looking into the past to understand the present; rather, they are exhorted to be forward-looking, optimistic, to set goals to maximize what is in their self-interest. Such practices discourage both dependency and a sense of interdependence and thus foster narcissistic states and forms of relating. (p. 165)

Lynne Layton (2014), assistant clinical professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, explicitly discussed the effects of neoliberalism on the psyche of the individual, attributing trends of narcissism, disavowal, and perversion to the ideology. Tracing neoliberalism from the economic to the social, Layton poignantly described the way society views vulnerable populations, positing this view was ushered into existence as a direct response to the shift to neoliberalism.

It is a hallmark of US neoliberal political life that the more people are rendered vulnerable and dispensable, the more the state of vulnerability becomes figured as shameful. As many have noted (see, for example, Centeno and Cohen, 2012), increased income inequality has led the privileged to rationalize their privilege, which in turn has led to decreasing empathy for the poor. (Layton, 2014, p. 164)

According to Layton (2014), as progressively more individuals experience shame because of their own sense of vulnerability, they respond by either retaliating or withdrawing, thwarting social interdependence and connection and increasing narcissistic tendencies and processes. Layton asserted this process also leads the individual to rely on the Freudian defense of disavowal, where when confronted by an

experience or truth too painful to bear (vulnerability), one replaces it with something less painful (I don't need help), regardless of how true or untrue it is). Neoliberalism has caused individuals to consistently experience vulnerability while simultaneously prompting a cultural shift from a relative sense of "comfort with dependence to a repudiation of dependence" (Layton, 2014, p. 171). In a state of anxiety, then, the individual pulls further away from social interdependence, exacerbating narcissistic qualities.

Finally, Gary Olson (2009), professor of political science at Moravian College, discussed how the culmination of genes, brain, behavior, and culture in today's corporate capitalism plays an integral role in squelching the individual's ability to be empathic. He hypothesized,

The neoliberal ideology justifying free market capitalism is one of the most potent empathy bracketing-off elements of that culture and hybrid cultural/neurobiological imprinting can override the neurobiological traits that should bring people together. The dominant culture's social engineering undermines and attenuates both the acceptance and institutionalization of empathy on a grand scale, while channeling its expression toward system maintenance behaviors. (p. 1)

This social engineering referenced by Olson is the biocultural process by which culture plays a role in the regulation of both the experience of emotion and emotional expression (Hochschild, 1979). Cross cultural differences in the way individuals think about perceived stimuli and in the way they react emotionally are highly attributable to cultural mediation (Chiao et al., 2009). For example, in the United States, under its unique brand of corporate capitalism ushered in by neoliberal policies, the concept of care, or the way we think about caring for others has been privatized (Hochschild, 2003). Placing elderly relatives into care facilities is, for the clear majority of American families, the norm, as no one expects a family or individual to take on the

effort it requires to care for an aged and ailing individual. (Olson, 2009). In contrast, the norm in numerous other cultures is to care for the elderly and ailing, precisely because they view the situation differently and cultural values of collectivism impact the way they view caring (Olson, 2009).

Priming in Research

This study aimed to assess the cultural effects of neoliberalism on empathy, and although experimental manipulation of the cultural values expounded by neoliberalism or critical theory was not possible, using priming, a manipulation of the accessibility and salience of cultural aspects of these paradigms was possible (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). Experiments that utilize priming generally consist of a between-subjects study designed to assess how engaging in a specific task will influence responses to a seemingly unrelated task (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). Theoretically, a priming agent will trigger a specific desired mental representation or way of thinking (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000), and other related concepts in an individual's memory will be simultaneously activated (Neely, 1977). In the case of this study, the desired mental representation or way of thinking consisted of either a neoliberal or critical conceptualization of the individual, education, and society. When either of these theoretical frameworks or conceptualizations was primed, it was elicited to the forefront of the individual's experience and would serve as a schema through which new information is processed and new experiences interpreted (Higgins, 1996). Any tasks performed directly after exposure to the priming agent may have been influenced by a spillover effect (Higgins, 1996). As cultural or theoretical values are more likely to influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behavior when they are salient and accessible (Oyserman & Lee, 2008), through priming

neoliberal or critical conceptualizations of the individual, education, and society, this study would be able to manipulate target cultural variables of neoliberalism and critical theory.

Numerous studies have elicited the use of priming as an effective means of assessing the effects of cultural variables. For example, Gardner, Gabriel, and Lee (1999) used priming to assess whether independent and interdependent self-construals act as cognitive mediators between cultural context and social judgment. Participants were asked to read a story about a Sumerian warrior and complete a word search, each priming either an independent or interdependent self-construal style. The independent story described a main character contemplating only benefits to himself and acting in such a way as to benefit himself, while the interdependent story's main character focused and acted on that which would benefit his family. Similarly, the independent priming word search used only pronouns, such as I or mine, while the interdependent search used only pronouns, such as we or ours. Following exposure to either an independent or interdependent primer, every participant completed a values inventory and tasks that assessed social judgment and self-construal. Consistent with their hypotheses, participants primed with an interdependent self-construal gave higher endorsements to collectivist values and greater perceived importance of social obligations and described their selves in a more interdependent manner than those primed with an independent self-construal.

Chiao and colleagues (2010) investigated cultural influences on neural representations of the self by priming participants with either an individualist or collectivist self-construal and scanning them with functional magnetic resonance imaging while performing a self-judgment task. In addition to the Sumerian warrior

story previously described, participants were also asked to think for two minutes about what makes them similar to (collectivist prime) or different than (individualistic prime) their family and friends and then write a short essay about either what they (individualistic) or their families (collectivist) expect themselves to do. Consistent with their hypotheses, there was a significant interaction between the types of self-judgments they saw represented in brain activation and the self-construal primes (Chiao et al., 2010). Participants primed with an individualistic self-construal showed significantly greater activation in the medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex for general self-descriptions than to those that were contextual and participants primed with a collectivist self-construal (Chiao et al., 2010). Conversely, participants primed with a collectivist self-construal presented with greater activation in these regions for contextual self-descriptions than for those that were general (Chiao et al., 2010).

More recently, a study published in *Science* utilized priming to investigate potential effects of reading different forms of literature on theory of mind (Kidd & Castano, 2013). Participants were randomly assigned to read a short passage of nonfiction, literary fiction, or popular fiction; a control group was assigned to read nothing. A false belief task and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test were administered as means of measuring cognitive and affective theory of mind, respectively. Throughout five experiments, results showed participants who read the literary fiction passage outperformed all others on both the false belief task and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test, indicating reading literary fiction can, at least temporarily, improve theory of mind. In the same manner that Kidd and Castano (2013) used seemingly innocuous priming agents (short passages of different forms of

literature) to influence what has been viewed as a stable construct (theory of mind), this study used priming agents to assess dispositional empathy, a construct that has also been deemed relatively stable.

Summary

Within the past 10 years there have been a growing number of studies aimed at assessing neoliberalism, empathy, and subsequently, the effects of components of neoliberalism on both the individual and society (Layton, 2014; Olson, 2009; Savani et al., 2011). Each of these studies and/or theoretical discussions has provided a valuable contribution to our common understanding the effects of neoliberalism on the individual and society and has paved the way for more specific, empirical research. To date, there does not appear to have been a study that has explicitly and directly assessed the potential cultural effects of neoliberalism on individual expressions of empathy. In view of this gap in the literature, the purpose of this study was to assess how the cultural effects of neoliberalism, namely hyper-individualism, commodification, and market ideology may be affecting individual expressions of empathy. This study utilized priming, a method commonly used to assess cultural variables, in an experimental, static group comparison design with quantitative methods of data collection and analyses.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

To determine potential influences of the cultural effects of neoliberalism on the individual's expression of empathy, participants were randomly assigned to exposure to a neoliberal primer (see Appendix A), a critical primer (see Appendix B), or no primer prior to self-administration of three measures assessing empathy. The neoliberal and critical primers were created by the researcher, and each consisted of two parts. The first was a one-page text describing the individual, society, and the purpose of education through either a neoliberal or critical theory lens. The second was a ranking item aimed at eliciting either a neoliberal or critical mindset and engaged participants in thinking about their assigned reading. Participants were then asked to complete two self-administered assessments to determine their levels of empathy and complete a demographic questionnaire. Mean scores were then analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine potential differences and effects of the priming agents on Interpersonal Reactivity Index and Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores.

Participants

Forty participants volunteered to engage in the study and completed it. Using the statistical software, G-Power, a power analysis was completed to determine a sufficient sample size for the study. With three groups, three outcome variables, an

effect size of .2, an alpha of .05, and the statistical power set at .8, an a priori computation yielded a recommended total sample size of 39 or 13 participants for each group. In the neoliberal group, there were a total of 14 participants, consisting of 2 males and 12 females. In both the critical and control groups, there were 13 total participants, consisting of 4 males and 9 females in each group.

Participants in this study were generally representative of the age, gender, and ethnicity of the overall population at the University of Northern Colorado, with some variations. In total, 75% of participants were female and 25% were male. According to the University of Northern Colorado website, 63% of students are female and 37% are male (University of Northern Colorado, 2016), suggesting that females were slightly overrepresented in this sample. All participants in this study were aged between 18 to 24, with 60% of participants reporting their age as 18. According to the University of Northern Colorado website, just under 60% of students are between the ages of 18 and 22 (University of Northern Colorado, 2016). In terms of ethnicity, 65% of participants self-identified as being White, while 35% reported being from an ethnic minority. Similarly, at the University of Northern Colorado, 58.8% of the student body is White. Finally, 34% of the students at the University of Northern Colorado have parents who did not graduate from college (University of Northern Colorado, 2016), while 62.5% of the parents of participants in this study had not earned a bachelor's degree.

All participants were recruited through the student research pool. Three inclusion criteria were utilized in participant selection. First, students had to be at least 18 years of age to provide their own consent. Second, because this study assessed potential cultural phenomena and the individual process of psychological and cultural acculturation is a long-term process (Berry, 2005), participants must have been born

and lived in the United States for all but one year of their lives. Finally, because the United States educational system is a primary agent of socialization (Morrison & McIntyre, 1971), all participants must have participated in and graduated from a formal educational system within the United States, to include any public, private, or charter educational institution, but to exclude any home-school experience extending beyond one year. Students who access and participate in research studies through the research pool are typically granted credit within the undergraduate psychology class through which they are qualified. Participation was documented through the online research pool system, and credit was dictated and granted by course instructors. No other incentives were granted for participation in this study.

Instrumentation

Priming Agents

The principal investigator of this study created two priming agents, each with the aim of encompassing how the individual, human progress, the educational system, and society are conceptualized within neoliberal and critical frameworks. To engage and prime participants through a variety of means, each primer consisted of two components including a brief text and a question in which they were asked to rank four scenarios in the order they would like to see each occur.

The text was an approximately one-page passage containing declarative statements or short paragraphs that describe the individual, education, and society through either a neoliberal or critical paradigm. Each contained the broad and most salient tenets of each theoretical orientation. As an example, one statement taken from the neoliberal primer stated, “A good education improves people’s skills and abilities. Education also makes people more productive and worth more” (Becker, 1993a). A

statement from the critical theory primer stated, “Education is the practice of freedom. It is the system through which people learn about how to help transform their world. Education can help people see signs of social injustices” (Freire, 2012).

To ensure the internal validity of these instruments, all text was collected from existing literature—primarily texts from neoliberal or critical authors or peer-reviewed articles. In addition, two experts in critical theory and two experts in neoliberalism were consulted at both the draft and final stages of each primer to review and assess for consistency and an accurate representation of the theoretical paradigm each was designed to prime. Expert reviewers for the neoliberal primer included Dr. Hava Gordon, Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Denver, and Dr. Joshua Hanan, Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Communication Ethics in the Communication Department, also at the University of Denver. Expert reviewers for the critical theory primer included Dr. Joshua Hanan, Dr. Robert Urquhart, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Denver, and Dr. David Palmer, Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Northern Colorado.

To ensure the primers were equitable in length and readability, each was statistically evaluated and assessed for ease or difficulty of readability using the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level and Flesch Reading Ease measures. The neoliberal primer contained 481 words, was written at an eighth grade level, and had a reading ease score of 51.6. The critical primer contained 499 words, was written at an eighth grade level, and had a reading ease score of 49.9. Both grade level and reading ease scores can be deemed equitable and are appropriate for the target undergraduate sample population, as readability scores in the 30s indicate an undergraduate reading ability,

and a grade level of eight is consistent with the reading level of the general population (Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975). Finally, both primers were previously shown to influence empathy scores through two pilot studies, with both graduate and undergraduate populations (to be discussed).

Empathy Measures

Two different types of priming measures were used to assess participants' empathy after they had been exposed to the primers. Two subtests from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983) were used to assess emotional and cognitive aspects of empathy (see Appendix C). Another instrument, the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001), was used as a supplemental measure to the self-report (see Appendix D).

Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index is a 28-item, self-report measure of dispositional empathy. It is the only instrument that uses a multidimensional conceptualization of the construct and includes both cognitive and affective components (Davis, 1983). Relying on factor analysis for its construction, the instrument consists of four subscales, including Empathic Concern and Personal Distress, both of which assess the affective components of empathy, and Perspective Taking and Fantasy, which assess the cognitive components (Davis, 1983). The Empathic Concern scale assesses other-oriented feelings experienced by an individual, including sympathy and concern; while, in contrast, the Personal Distress scale assesses self-oriented feelings such as anxiety or unease (Davis, 1983). The Perspective Taking scale “assesses the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others” (Davis, 1983, p. 113) and the Fantasy scale

assesses an individual's propensity to imagine themselves playing out the feelings and actions of characters presented in art (Davis, 1983).

Creation of a total empathy score by summing subscales scores is not appropriate, as not all subscales are directly correlated (Davis, 1980). Although the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales correlate directly and have been combined in some research, Empathic Concern and Personal Distress subscales are inversely correlated, as are the Perspective Taking and Personal Distress subscales (D'Orazio, 2002). Davis' (1980) delineation and use of each of these constructs in the creation of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index are supported both theoretically (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Hoffman, 1977) and empirically (Stotland, Mathews, Sherman, Hansson, & Richardson, 1978), and the instrument has been widely used because of its substantial reliability and its internal (Konrath et al., 2011), convergent, and discriminant validity within the various sample populations (Davis, 1994). Internal validities of each subscale ranged from .71 to .77, while test-retest reliabilities ranged from .62 to .71 in a group of 225 male and 204 female undergraduate students in the southern United States (Davis, 1980).

As previous literature has suggested a decline in empathy, evidenced by significantly lower scores on both the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales (Konrath et al., 2011), only these two subscales were utilized in this study. The author of this scale provided permission for its use (see Appendix D) in the study and allowed some flexibility in the way these subscales were used. Each subscale consists of seven questions, each of which is answered via a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 4. Total scores range from 0 to 28 for each subscale with higher scores indicating higher levels of sympathy and concern for those in need, as is the case with

the Empathic Concern subscale (Davis, 1983), and a stronger tendency to take on another's "psychological point of view," as is the case in the Perspective Taking subscale (Davis, 1983, p. 114).

The subscales were designed as separate and presented as two distinct scales. However, if high levels of correlation exist in a particular population (e.g., $> .8$), these subscales may be combined into one score, per Dr. Davis (personal communication, November 2015). That said, the correlations with the present sample were moderate ($r = .513$) and it was not necessary to sum these scores.

Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test: Revised, Adult Version

The Reading the Minds in the Eyes Test (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001) is a widely-used test of affective theory of mind (Kidd & Castano, 2013). The Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test assesses how well an individual can accurately decipher the mental or emotional state of another based upon limited stimuli (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). The most recent version was tested using and comparing populations of 15 adults with Asperger's syndrome or high functioning autism, 122 normal adult controls, 103 normal adult students, and 14 adults from the general populations whose intelligence scores matched the 15 adults with Asperger's syndrome or high functioning autism (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). Participants view a series of 36 photographs of pairs of eyes that have been dis-embedded from faces and, as quickly as they can, choose one word from four (i.e., decisive, amused, aghast, bored) that best describes the complex mental state exhibited in the photograph (Baker, Peterson, Pulos, & Kirkland, 2014). The Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test is often preferred over other measures when assessing social intelligence due to its sensitivity to

individual differences (Baker et al., 2014) and the ease of administration offered with the pencil and paper format (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001).

Used in over 250 studies, the test has been adapted for use with children and in brain imaging (Baker et al., 2014). It has been translated into numerous languages for use in several countries (Baker et al., 2014), and its reliability and validity have been evaluated within a variety of populations (Fernandez-Abascal, Cabello, Fernandez-Berrocal, & Baron-Cohen, 2013; Vellante et al., 2013). To assess the psychometric properties of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test, a sample of 200 18- to 32-year-old undergraduates at an Italian university were administered the Empathy Quotient, the Toronto Alexithymia Scale, and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (Vellante et al., 2013). Internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, was .605, and confirmatory factor analysis yielded a unidimensional model with a maximal weighted internal consistency reliability of .719 (Vellante et al., 2013). Based on the correlation coefficient, test-retest reliability of .833 was obtained (Vellante et al., 2013). In a sample of 358 Spanish undergraduate students who were administered the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test and then again at a one-year follow-up, test-retest reliability was .63 ($p < .01$) per Fernandez-Abascal et al. (2013). The test was primarily chosen as a performance task to supplement the self-report measure of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire consisting of six questions that elicited age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of parental education (to determine socioeconomic status), and religious and political affiliation

(see Appendix E). Participants were asked to write in both their age and gender, and on all other items were asked to circle the desired option/s or circle “other.”

Pilot Studies

Prior to conducting this study, two separate pilot studies were conducted to ensure the internal validity of the priming agents and to provide justification through a trend in data for the current study. Like the current study, both pilot studies utilized a neoliberal and a critical primer, the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking measures of empathy, and each study hypothesized that participants primed with a neoliberal paradigm would have lower average empathy scores than those primed with a critical paradigm. The first pilot study utilized a sample size of 10 graduate students, all of whom were from one graduate program to determine whether the primers seemed to be effective. The primers had been reviewed by experts but were written at a more advanced level (i.e., undergraduate reading level) than the primers that were used in the second pilot study. Pilot Study 2 utilized a sample size of 24 undergraduate students, all of whom were from one senior level communications class. Participants were provided with primers that had been edited to an eighth grade reading level. Results for both pilot studies revealed a pattern of effect, though some differences did exist.

Results of Pilot Study 1 showed participants primed with neoliberalism scored lower on the empathic concern subscale (Empathic Concern = 22) than did those primed with critical theory (Empathic Concern = 26). However, group scores on the Perspective Taking subscale were identical, regardless of the primer (critical primer Perspective Taking = 21; neoliberal primer Perspective Taking = 21). These data suggested the affective component of empathy (empathic concern) was negatively

affected more than the cognitive component (perspective taking), by primers eliciting a neoliberal schema (though not to a statistically significant degree). The medium effect size found in Pilot Study 1 (partial eta squared = .533) suggested that despite the small number of participants, the neoliberal and critical primer proved moderately related to Empathic Concern subscale scores (Cohen, 1988). Subsequently, and despite the non-significance found ($p = .07$), a correlation existed.

Results from Pilot Study 2 also seemed to support the trend with participants primed with a neoliberal paradigm scoring lower on both the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales (Empathic Concern = 15.75, Perspective Taking = 15.75) than those primed with a critical paradigm (Empathic Concern = 18.92, Perspective Taking = 23.33). In contrast to Pilot Study 1, the findings of Pilot Study 2 were statistically significant ($p = .02$) with a small effect size (partial eta squared = .30).

Procedures

For the primary study, requests were made to the University of Northern Colorado and two other universities in a western state to access their respective student research pools. Recruitment and participation occurred in a rolling fashion as it was not expected that time of year would make a difference in participant responses. Data collection began at the University of Northern Colorado in September 2017, after Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix F) was granted and as soon as the research pool became available, and continued until October 2017, when sufficient data were collected. Due to the timely means by which participants were obtained at the University of Northern Colorado, it was not necessary to access participants from either the University of Denver or the University of Colorado Colorado Springs.

Once access was granted, a letter detailing the aim of the study, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and a request for participants was e-mailed to professors of students taking undergraduate psychology courses requesting their students access the student research pool. As participation in this study was voluntary, each participant was informed of the nature and purpose of the project and the assessment tools utilized and given the opportunity to either refuse participation in the project or to sign a consent form. Participant confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that no identifying information was attached to any document other than the consent form. A numeric identifier was assigned to all other sources of data.

As the effect of the primers on subsequent assessments was meant to be subconscious, participants were told only that the study aimed to assess the ability of American college students to consider the perspectives of others. All aspects of the study in which participants were involved were conducted in a private, reserved study room on the Greeley campus of the University of Northern Colorado.

Once informed consent was obtained, volunteers drew a number and were handed the corresponding, previously created packets containing one of the two primers or no primer, the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, and the adult, revised version of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test. Participants were instructed to carefully read and complete all components of the primer and to then immediately complete the self-administered Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test. To mitigate any potential priming effects completion of the first assessment might have on completion of the second, the order in which the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test was

alternated for each packet. In all instances, participants completed the demographic questionnaire last, following completion of the two empathy measures (two subscales of Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test).

Prior to subject participation, 39 three-digit numeric identifications were randomly generated using Research Randomizer software, and participant packets corresponding to identification numbers were created. The first number in the three-digit numeric identification indicated which primer the packet would contain. Even numbers corresponded to the critical theory primer and odd numbers corresponded to the neoliberal primer. The last, or third number in the numeric identification, indicated the order in which the assessment measures would be self-administered. An even number corresponded to self-administering the Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales first and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test second, while an odd number corresponded to self-administering the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test first and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscales second. For ease, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index scales were always administered together, either before or after the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test. Identification numbers were typed on a piece of paper and placed in an envelope. Each participant drew an identification number and was given the corresponding packet.

Upon completion of all three assessment instruments and the demographic questionnaire, participants were debriefed, with all components of the incomplete disclosure explained and any questions they had were answered. The researcher's professional e-mail was made available for any participant who wanted to privately discuss an issue related to the study. Finally, students were thanked for their participation, and documentation was made in the online research pool website to

insure they received credit. Two research assistants, each of whom was a doctoral student in the Department of School Psychology at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley campus, and trained by the principal researcher to run participants in a standardized fashion, collected all data.

Research Design

This study was an experimental, static group comparison (Cook & Campbell, 1979). A between-groups design was utilized with a total of three groups: two treatment groups, each exposed to either a neoliberal or critical primer, and a control group that was not exposed to a primer. The study used three outcome scores on two measures (Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores) for all three groups to determine potential effects of treatment (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Primary threats to validity commonly associated with this research design include selection, or the possibility that group differences exist prior to treatment, and experimental mortality, the dropping out of participants causing unequal groups (Cook & Campbell, 1979). To mitigate the threat of preexisting group differences, random assignment to neoliberal and critically primed groups was utilized. Though typically common in this research design, experimental mortality proved no threat to validity in this study, because participants could complete their participation in one session of less than one hour. Finally, to displace any effects of experimental mortality, this study continued until equal numbers of participant in the treatment and non-treatment groups were obtained.

Data Analysis

This study contained one independent, categorical variable with three levels and three interval, dependent variables. The independent variable was exposure to primer and its three levels were a neoliberal primer, a critical primer, and no primer. Dependent variables consisted of one Empathic Concern and one Perspective Taking subscale score from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and one from the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test score. The appropriate statistical analysis for this combination and nature of independent and dependent variables was a one-way MANOVA (Harlow, 2014).

The one-way MANOVA is used to determine whether differences exist between two or more independent groups on more than one continuous, dependent variable (Harlow, 2014). Assumptions include multivariate normality, as the sampling distribution of means of the dependent variables and all linear combinations of those dependent variables must be normally distributed (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2012). Linear relationships must exist between all pairs of dependent variables, covariates, and dependent-covariates (Brace et al., 2012). Multivariate normality and linearity can be preliminarily determined by assessing scatterplots (Harlow, 2014). Additionally, there must be homoscedasticity or, homogeneity of variance-covariance (Brace et al., 2012), which can be assessed using Box's M test (Harlow, 2014). Finally, all observations must be independent of each other, and there must be no multicollinearity (Brace et al., 2012). Multicollinearity can be determined upon referencing a correlation matrix (Harlow, 2014).

The primary research question in this study examined whether individuals exposed to cultural primers detailing either neoliberal or critical theory paradigms

respond significantly different on measures of empathy and attention to facial emotion as measured by the Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores. To determine whether differences in Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking mean scores exist between groups primed with neoliberal and critical theory primers, and to test the research hypothesis that those participants primed with a neoliberal paradigm will have a lower group mean score than those primed with critical theory, a one-way MANOVA test statistic was conducted using an alpha level of .05.

Finally, a total of six additional research questions were analyzed to determine whether the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religious and political affiliation affected empathy scores. Age, naturally being a scale variable was left as is; however, the others were coded as nominal variables with the following categories. Gender was coded simply as either male or female. Although there were six possible options for self-identifying ethnicity, all answers were collapsed into either White, ethnic majority, or ethnic minority. Socioeconomic status was measured by parental educational attainment, as is recommended in the literature as a resource based measure (Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Reimers, 2012). Because there is no universally defined or official government definition as to who belongs to the low, middle, and high categories of social economic status (Elwell, 2014), three categories were identified, informed by the explicit delineation of income differences between those without a bachelor's degree, those with only a bachelor's degree, and those with an advanced degree (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). Subsequently, participants who indicated their parent had anything less than a bachelor's degree, were coded as low socioeconomic status. Participants who indicated their parent

obtained a bachelor's degree were coded as middle socioeconomic status, and participants who indicated their parent had any advanced degree were coded as high socioeconomic status.

Finally, like ethnicity, despite numerous options for self-identifying both religious and political affiliation, each were separately collapsed and coded into either "has a religious (or political) affiliation" or "has no religious (or political) affiliation." Following coding, two-way MANOVAs were run to assess the potential effects of each of these variables. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

To determine potential effects of the cultural effects of neoliberalism on empathy, participants were exposed to one of three priming conditions (a neoliberal primer, a critical primer, or no primer) prior to completing the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test, and a brief demographic questionnaire.

Descriptive and Preliminary Analyses

Prior to checking assumptions or running statistical analyses, all data were entered and coded appropriately using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 22 and then rechecked for accuracy. Items 3, 7, and 9 from the Empathic Concern subscale and items 2 and 8 from the Perspective Taking subscale were reverse coded, as indicated in the Interpersonal Reactivity Index scoring procedures (Davis, 1980). All scores for demographic variables of ethnicity, socioeconomic status evidenced by level of parent education, and political and religious affiliations were coded in a manner to make them appropriate for analysis as described in Chapter III. There were no missing data points for any participant on any measure.

Descriptive analyses of the various measures were conducted and are presented in Table 1. Mean Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, and Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores across all levels of the independent variable are presented as well.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent variable	Primer	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Empathic Concern	Control	19.62	1.38	13
	Neoliberal	19.00	1.65	14
	Critical	19.92	1.29	13
Perspective Taking	Control	19.38	1.72	13
	Neoliberal	18.64	1.32	14
	Critical	18.31	1.24	13
Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test	Control	25.92	2.18	13
	Neoliberal	25.43	4.15	14
	Critical	25.08	3.28	13

Preliminary assumption checking for linear relationships between all dependent variables via scatterplots revealed no relationship between the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores and Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores across any of the three priming conditions (see Figure 1), indicating that this dependent variable was not appropriate to use for the planned multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). When the assumption of linearity is violated by one of the dependent variables, the researcher has three options. If data present a non-linear relationship, transformations of either the independent or dependent variable or both can be considered (Laerd Statistics, 2015). This option creates a potential for moderately, strongly, and extremely positively or negatively skewed data to achieve a linear relationship and is appropriate when the relationship in

question is skewed rather than non-existent (Laerd Statistics, 2015). In addition to transformation, the researcher can choose to run the analysis with the data as is, accepting a loss of power, or to remove the nonlinear dependent variable from the analysis (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

It is apparent from these figures that no relationship existed between all dependent variables, specifically, the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test scores and either the Empathic Concern or Perspective Taking scores. Because no relationship existed to transform and because MANOVA is highly sensitive to violations of assumptions, a decision was made to continue with a MANOVA, with the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test variable omitted. Approval was granted and all assumption checking and analyses going forward focused on Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores as the dependent variables assessed across all three levels of the independent variable.

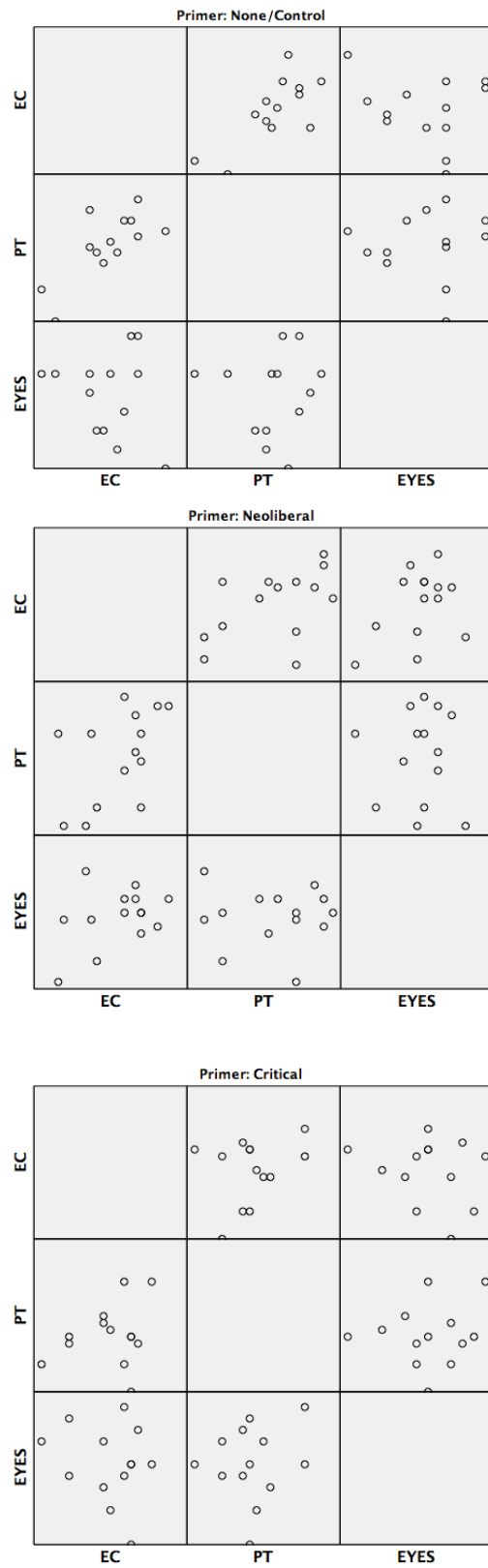


Figure 1. Relationships between dependent variables across priming conditions.

Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscale scores were normally distributed for each level of the independent variable (control, Empathic Concern, and Perspective Taking) as assessed by Shapiro-Wilks test ($p > .05$). There were approximate linear relationships between Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores across all levels of the independent variable, as assessed by scatterplots (see Figure 1). Moderate correlations existed between Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscale scores ($r = .513$), indicating no multicollinearity in the data set. Homogeneity of variance–covariance matrices was assessed and met by Box’s M test of equality of covariance matrices ($p = .619$), as was the homogeneity of variances assumption, as assessed by Levene’s Test ($p > .05$). No multivariate outliers existed in the data as assessed by calculation and inspection of Mahalanobis distance ($p > .001$); however, five univariate outliers were identified as assessed by inspection of a boxplot (see Figure 2). Notably, four of the five outliers were found within the group exposed to the critical primer.

Univariate outliers are extreme scores that exist within the data set, exert a strong influence on both means and standard deviations within MANOVA, and subsequently have an adverse effect on final results (Osborne & Overbay, 2004). Several appropriate alternatives exist for dealing with outliers, each one dependent upon the reason an outlier is present. Therefore, the first course of action was to determine whether the extreme score or scores were due to errors in data entry or data measurement, or if they accurately represent unusual values (Laerd Statistics, 2015). In this case, all five outliers represented genuine scores of participants.

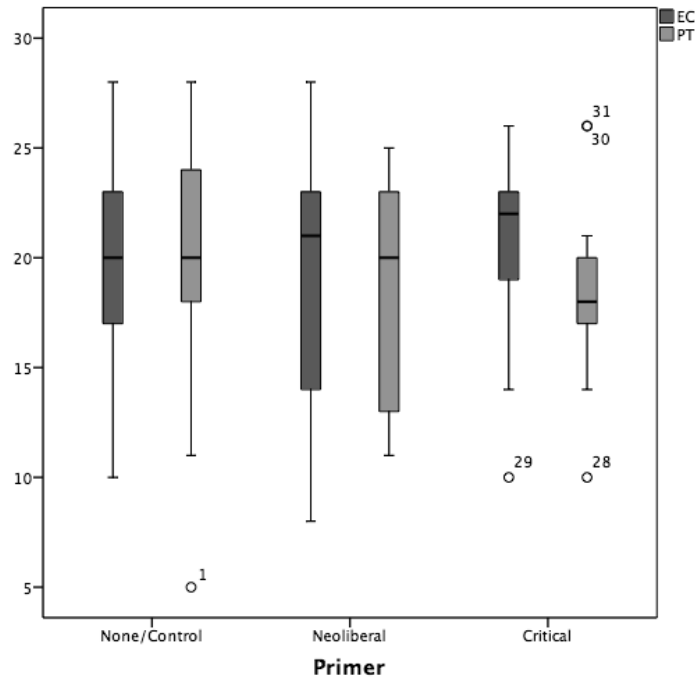


Figure 2. Boxplot of univariate outliers.

Since all other assumptions had been met because the omission of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test variable decreased the necessary sample size from 39 to 33 and to evaluate the effects of the outliers on the findings of this study and further inform decisions about how to treat them, the data were run six times. The initial analysis included all outliers with the data set as is, and each subsequent analysis was run with one more outlier removed, beginning with the most extreme and proceeding inward (Harlow, 2014). Although significance decreased in a step-wise fashion and observed power increased with the removal of one, two, and then three outliers, results remained non-significant throughout all analyses (see Table 2). The decision was made to leave all outliers in the final analysis.

Table 2

Significance and Observed Power with Outliers Removed Successively

Cases removed	Significance	Observed power
None	0.951	0.085
402	0.729	0.165
402 849	0.568	0.22
402 849 676	0.395	0.3
402 849 676 219	0.41	0.3
402 849 676 219 668		0.652

Leaving all outliers in the analysis, transformations were then considered. A MANOVA with the transformed data was run and analyzed, and two statisticians were consulted to help inform a final decision about how to address the outliers.

Specifically, reflection and square root transformations were conducted to address the negative skew of each dependent variable caused by the presence of outliers (Howell,

2007). With these transformations in place, results remained non-significant ($p = .889$). Because transformations were not recommended by either statistician, because they proved ineffective, and because if used, all results of statistical analyses conducted would be much more complex to interpret (Osborne, 2002), a decision was made to run the final analysis with all outliers in the data set in their original state.

Analysis of Research Questions

- Q1 Do participants who have been exposed to primers detailing either neoliberal or critical cultural paradigms, and participants who have not been primed, have significantly different group-means on the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test?
- H1 Participants primed with neoliberalism will have lower group mean scores on the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index than participants primed with critical theory and control participants who were not primed.

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect, if any, of three different priming conditions on two empathy measures. Participants primed with neoliberalism scored lower in empathic concern (Empathic Concern = 19.00) than those primed with critical theory (Empathic Concern = 19.92) and control participants (Empathic Concern = 19.62), as hypothesized (see Table 1 and Figure 1). In contrast, participants primed with neoliberalism had higher Perspective Taking scores (Perspective Taking = 18.64) than those primed with critical theory (Perspective Taking = 18.31), but a lower average score than controls (Perspective Taking = 19.38) (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Wilks's Lamda, the most commonly recommended statistic (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005) was referenced and indicated the differences between priming conditions on the combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores were not significant, $F(4, 72) = .174, p = .951$;

Wilks's $\lambda = .981$. Effect for group differences accounted for 1% of the group differences plus associated error variance (partial eta squared = .010) and the observed statistical power was .085.

Following analysis of the primary research question, six 2-way MANOVAs were run to assess whether demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, level of parent education, and religious or political affiliation contributed to potential differences in group means among those exposed to neoliberal, critical, and no primers. Each additional MANOVA included one demographic variable as an additional fixed factor, and the interactions between each variable and the primer were analyzed. Results are presented in Table 3 and show that none of the demographic factors, including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and political and religious affiliation, had a significant influence on participant empathy scores.

- Q2 Does age moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who are younger will have greater mean empathy scores than those who are older when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers or no primer.

A total of five ages were represented in the sample, with 60% age 18 (see Table 4). There was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by age for combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .781$, $F(8,56) = .920$, $p = .507$, partial eta squared = .116. Additionally, the interaction effect between age and type of primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .832$, $F(8,56) = .672$, $p = .714$, partial eta squared = .088.

Table 3

Wilks's Lambda Multivariate Test for Demographic Variables

Demographic interaction	Value	<i>f</i>	Hypothesis <i>df</i>	Error <i>df</i>	Sig.	Partial eta ²	Observed power
Age	0.78	0.92	8	56	0.51	0.446	0.384
Age ^a primer	0.83	0.67	8	56	0.71	0.088	0.279
Gender	0.86	2.65	2	33	0.09	0.138	0.489
Gender ^a primer	0.86	1.32	4	66	0.27	0.074	0.391
Ethnicity	1	0.02	2	33	0.98	0.001	0.053
Ethnicity ^a primer	0.92	0.71	4	66	0.59	0.041	0.217
Level of parent education (SES) ^a primer	0.86	1.21	4	60	0.32	0.074	0.356
	0.69	1.52	8	60	0.17	0.168	0.625
Religious	1	0.04	2	33	0.96	0.003	0.056
Religious ^a primer	0.94	0.48	4	66	0.75	0.028	0.158
Political	0.94	1	2	33	0.38	0.057	0.209
Political ^a primer	0.96	0.31	4	66	0.87	0.018	0.115

Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

^aNo mean is available.

- Q3 Does gender moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?
- H1 Participants who identify as female will have greater mean empathy scores than those who identify as males when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.

Table 4
Age

Age	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
18	24	60	19.17	19.13
19	6	15	22.67	19.33
20	6	15	19	18
21	3	7.5	20	19
24	1	2.5	a	a

^aNo mean is available.

Females were overrepresented in this sample. In fact, 75%, or 30 of the 40 participants, were female, while 25% (10) were male (see Table 5). There was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by gender for combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .862$, $F(2,33) = 2.646$, $p = .086$, partial eta squared = .138. Additionally, the interaction effect between gender and type of primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .857$, $F(4,66) = 1.324$, $p = .270$, partial eta squared = .074.

Table 5

Gender

Gender	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
Male	10	25	16.5	16
Female	30	75	20.5	19.7
Total	40	100	19.5	18.8

Q4 Does ethnicity moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?

H1 Participants who identify as being from an ethnic minority will have greater mean empathy scores than those from a majority ethnic group when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.

Most participants identified as belonging to a White, ethnic majority.

Specifically, 65% of the participants were White, while 35% were of a minority ethnicity (see Table 6). There was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by ethnicity for combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .999$, $F(2,33) = .024$, $p = .976$, partial eta squared = .001. Additionally, the interaction effect between gender and type of primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .919$, $F(4,66) = .708$, $p = .589$, partial eta squared = .041.

Table 6

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
Ethnic majority (White)	26	65	19.46	18.77
Ethnic minority	14	35	19.57	18.79
Hispanic or Latino	4	-10		
Black or African American	1	-2.5		
Asian/Pacific Island	3	-7.5		
Other	2	-5		
More than one	4	-10		

Q5 Does socioeconomic status, as indicated by level of parent education, moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?

H1 Participants from a low socioeconomic status, as indicated by a parental level of education less than a bachelor's degree will have greater mean empathy scores than those from a middle (bachelor's degree) or high (post graduate degree) socioeconomic status when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.

There was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by parent level of education (see Table 7) for Empathic Concern and Perspective

Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .857$, $F(4,60) = 1.206$, $p = .318$, partial eta squared = .074.

Additionally, the interaction effect between level of parent education and type of

primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .692$, $F(8,60) = 1.519$, $p = .170$, partial eta squared = .168.

Table 7

Socioeconomic Status Measured by Level of Parent Education

Socioeconomic status	Level of parent education	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
Low	No high school diploma	24	60	19.64	17.56
	General educational development				
	High school diploma				
	Post-secondary vocational				
Middle	Associate degree	8	20	19.75	20.62
	Bachelor's degree				
High	Master's degree	8	20	18.71	21
	Doctorate degree				

Q6 Does religious affiliation moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?

H1 Participants who identify with a religious affiliation will have greater mean empathy scores than those who do not affiliate with any when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers, or no primer.

Exactly half of all participants (50%) claimed some form of religious affiliation, while the other half claimed no religious affiliation (see Table 8). There

was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by religious affiliation for combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .997$ $F(2,33) = .043$, $p = .958$, partial eta squared = .003. Additionally, the interaction effect between religious affiliation and type of primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .944$, $F(4,66) = .484$, $p = .748$, partial eta squared = .028.

Table 8

Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
No religious affiliation	20	50	19.55	18.55
Some religious affiliation	20	50	19.45	19
Evangelical	4	-10		
Protestant	3	-7.5		
Roman Catholic	5	-12.5		
Buddhist	2	-5		
Other (wrote in Christian)	6	-15		

Q7 Does political affiliation moderate the effects of exposure to different priming conditions and combined empathy scores?

- H1 Participants who identify with a political affiliation will have greater mean empathy scores than those who do not identify with any when exposed to either neoliberal or critical primers or no primer.

A majority of 57.5% of participants reported some political affiliation while 42.5% reported none (see Table 9). There was not a statistically significant difference between priming conditions by political affiliation for combined Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores, Wilks's $\lambda = .943$, $F(2,33) = 1.001$, $p = .378$, partial eta squared = .057. Additionally, the interaction effect between political affiliation and type of primer exposed to on the combined dependent variables was not statistically significant, Wilks's $\lambda = .964$, $F(4,66) = .308$, $p = .872$, partial eta squared = .018.

Table 9

Political Affiliation

Political affiliation	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> Empathic Concern	<i>M</i> Perspective Taking
No political affiliation	17	42.5	18.24	17.88
Some political affiliation	23	57.5	20.43	19.43
Republican	11	-27.5		
Democrat	7	-17.5		
Independent	2	-5		

Summary

A one-way MANOVA was run to determine the effect of different priming conditions on empathy as assessed by Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscale scores. Participants read one of three potential priming passages: a neoliberal primer, a critical primer, and no primer. All assumptions for MANOVA were met except for univariate outliers, of which there were five. As their removal did not change the final results, all five outliers were kept in the data set. Empathic Concern scores were lower for those primed with neoliberalism than for controls and those primed with critical theory, while Perspective Taking scores for those primed with neoliberalism were higher than those primed with critical theory and lower than controls. The differences between the priming conditions on the combined dependent variables were not statistically significant. Demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, level of parental education, and religious and political affiliation did not significantly affect the differences between priming conditions on the combined variables, nor were there any significant interaction effects between demographic variables and priming conditions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of the cultural components of neoliberalism on empathy with the hypothesis that those exposed to a neoliberal paradigm would be less empathic than those exposed to a critical paradigm. This study was conducted using two empathy measures, the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking subscales from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, since results from the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test did not fit the requirements needed to be included in analysis. Confirming part of the hypothesis, participants primed with neoliberalism scored lower on the Empathic Concern subscale than those primed with critical theory and those not exposed to a primer, though this difference was not statistically significant. In contrast, participants primed with neoliberalism scored higher on the Perspective Taking subscale than did participants primed with critical theory and lower than those not primed. Demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religious and political affiliation did not significantly affect empathy scores.

The findings in this study did not support the idea that the cultural effects of neoliberalism, namely hyper-individualism, commodification, and market ideology have a significant effect on empathy. Additionally, within the sample population, demographic factors of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religious and

political affiliation did not influence participants' empathy scores or create a significant difference in the way the primers influenced them. Although not to a significant degree, the results show that the affective component of empathy (empathic concern) may have been negatively impacted by the cultural effects of neoliberalism to a greater degree than the cognitive component (perspective taking) by primers eliciting a neoliberal schema. Though speculative, this would suggest the cultural effects of neoliberalism played a greater role in decreasing the affective component of an individual's empathy than the cognitive component.

As no study to date has attempted to assess the effects of the cultural components of neoliberalism on empathy as broadly and as explicitly as the present, there is not a body of literature to which these findings can be directly compared. However, a small handful of studies aimed at assessing different effects of discrete components of neoliberalism have been conducted and present a trend of correlations between those specific components of neoliberalism and less social behaviors (Kasser, 2003; Savani et al., 2011).

In fact, the results of this study contradict the findings of a small number of studies aimed at assessing discrete components of neoliberalism. In one study, empathy was examined within the broader context of assessing the interpersonal and social consequences of priming individual choice, a discrete component of neoliberalism (Savani et al., 2011). Findings revealed that participants primed with the concept of individual choice showed reduced support for public policies that benefited society, increased support for expanding individuals' rights, higher levels of victim blaming, and reduced empathy for disadvantaged individuals when compared to controls (Savani et al., 2011). Though both the present study and the Savani et al.

(2011) study utilized priming, how they utilized or implemented the priming was notably different. Whereas Savani et al. engaged participants by having them press the spacebar whenever an individual they were viewing made a choice (e.g., a form of engagement that required decision making and motor activity), this study primed participants by having them read a passage and complete one rank order question (e.g., a more passive activity). It is possible that the form of priming used in this study was less engaging and did not sufficiently prime participants. No measure of participant engagement was incorporated in this study, but all participants did complete a brief rank order task after reading the material to increase their cognitive engagement in what they had read.

The results of this study also run counter to a trend of data seen in recent years among studies aimed at assessing discrete components of neoliberalism and the overwhelmingly negative effect they have on individuals (Kasser, 2003; Layton, 2014; Music, 2014). In one study, the consumerist and individualistic lifestyle prevalent in the United States was correlated to a decrease in empathy (Music, 2014). Another shows a correlation between materialism, a phenomenon akin to consumerism, and mental health (Kasser, 2003). Specifically, findings revealed high correlations between a focus on extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic goals and emotional insecurity, unhappiness, and less caring and empathic attitudes (Kasser, 2003). The work of one psychoanalyst suggested that within the neoliberal context, the individual is rendered vulnerable and dispensable, and thus is in a constant state of anxiety (Layton, 2014). This phenomenon may have contributed to the systemic belief that vulnerability is shameful, and, in turn, narcissism, disavowal, and perversion were identified as the primary effects of neoliberalism on the individual's psyche (Layton, 2014). Other

research has suggested that when individuals are constantly being compared to others, an inherent byproduct of market ideology, they are less empathic and display less prosocial behaviors than controls (Yip & Kelly, 2013).

The results of this study were also unexpected within the context of a small body of literature showing correlations between characteristics of neoliberalism and less prosocial behaviors and characteristics. The findings also seem unlikely, as what seemed an effective priming agent, as evidenced by their use in two pilot studies, were ineffective with this sample population. The inconsistency of the findings in this study in comparison to those before it can potentially be attributed to numerous causal factors including the internal validity of the priming instrument, differences in methodology and sample populations, and/or some other inherent limitations of the study.

Consistent with the findings in Pilot Study 1, the present study produced non-significant results, indicating the cultural effects of neoliberalism did not significantly and adversely impact empathy. The results of both studies also indicate the cultural effects of neoliberalism seemed to have negatively impacted the affective component of empathy to a greater degree than the cognitive component, although not to a significant degree.

Several possible explanations exist for the differences in results seen in this study, the pilot studies that informed it, and other literature. Additionally, several notable differences exist between this study and the two pilot studies, each of which may have contributed to a difference in the pattern of data. First, neither pilot study utilized a control group consisting of participants with no exposure to a priming agent. The lack of a control group might mean the differences between those primed with

neoliberalism and those primed with critical theory may have appeared to be more important than when compared to the average score of a control group. Additionally, although larger sample sizes typically increase the chance of finding a significant difference, this was not the case in this study. Despite a sample size of 40, significant differences were not found when previously with a group of 24 participants, differences were significant ($p = .02$), and with a group of 10, they were close ($p = .07$). In addition to the differences already noted, all participants from the study with significant findings were from a single senior undergraduate level communications class, while all 10 participants in the first pilot study were from one graduate school psychology program. In contrast, this study utilized a participant pool that drew from numerous undergraduate psychology classes. The extreme homogeneity of the previous sample groups may have played a role in the pattern of data, though no demographic information other than gender was elicited to test this hypothesis.

Finally, the current political climate within the United States and the influences it may have had on the participants and results of this study should be noted. Neoliberalism, though scarcely referenced explicitly, was brought to the forefront of political and social consciousness through both debate and the competing political campaigns of Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump. Subsequently, the salience of these topics may have produced results that may have been slightly different prior to this election year.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the current study. First, like most studies conducted through university research systems, the demographic homogeneity of

college populations (including participants' ethnicity and socioeconomic status) limits the generalizability of findings to those populations that match the sample population. All participants within this study also represented a relatively young section of the population with everyone aged between 18 and 24. In addition, the priming agents created and utilized for this study consisted of written texts and rank order questions that were designed to engage the participant. A relationship between the primers and Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking scores may have been stronger and had more impact on scores if each primer had included a visual component or an additional task, each of which may have engaged the participant in more significant manner. Finally, the final analysis used in this study did not include the performance-based task of the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test. Subsequently, results were based solely on two self-report measures, whose responses may have been influenced by the participant's desire to be viewed as socially acceptable (Watson & Morris, 1991). Each of these factors, in addition to limiting the scope of generalizability of the findings, may have also played a role in limiting the potential for significance found in the statistical analysis. Consequently, several changes can be made to enhance future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the limitations and non-significant findings of the current study, the principal investigator can make several recommendations to improve future research aimed at assessing the potential effects of neoliberalism and empathy. From 1979 to 2009, Empathic Concern scores among American college students showed a 48% decrease, while Perspective Taking scores dropped to 34%. Illuminated by the tentative pattern presented in the findings from this study, the findings in Pilot Study1,

and previous research highlighting greater deleterious effects on the affective component of empathy (Konrath et al. 2011), future studies may consider focusing on assessing the effects of neoliberalism on only the Empathic Concern subscale alone.

Neoliberalism as an entire ideology proved an unwieldy and difficult-to-measure construct. Subsequently, future researchers may choose to assess only one or two components of the concept at a time. Additionally, as some scholars posit neoliberalism and critical theory are too different to sit opposite each other in a comparative manner, future researchers may choose to assess neoliberalism by comparing one neoliberal group in isolation to a control group.

In terms of the priming agents, as previously noted, research has shown that photographs and graphics elicit more attention from readers than text alone and that priming the individual in a variety of ways produces a higher level of engagement (Moses, 2002). Therefore, it may provide greater internal validity to the priming agents, as well as create a greater effect on outcome variables if images embodying neoliberal and critical paradigms were added to supplement the text. Additionally, the creation of a primer that accurately represented the neoliberal ideology proved challenging, and despite numerous measures to ensure internal validity, the primer used in the present study seemed ineffective with this sample. That said, future research could consider the use of a preexisting measure that has been used successfully in assessing neoliberal tendencies and how they correlate to empathy.

Specifically, future researchers might consider the newly developed Neoliberal Beliefs Inventory, a relatively new measure created to assist psychologists in the study of neoliberal ideology (Bay-Cheng, Fitz, Alizaga, & Zucker, 2015). In early 2015, a group of researchers from the University of Buffalo, New York, and George

Washington University collaborated to develop the Neoliberal Beliefs Inventory. Research on the instrument was conducted using an undergraduate population from a private university in Washington DC, 76% of whom were female and 69% of whom were White. Though its creators assert more research is needed to further substantiate the Neoliberal Beliefs Inventory and each of its subscales, particularly in the areas of discriminant and predictive validity, it appears to be a promising new instrument to measure the potential effects of neoliberalism on empathy.

Finally, as not all societies have been as influenced by neoliberalism to the extent that the United States has, it may be beneficial for future researchers to consider and conduct cross-cultural, comparative analyses of empathy in individuals across countries with varying degrees of neoliberal policies and practices implemented (e.g., the United States compared to Cuba or Finland).

Conclusion

The broadest impetus for assessing the cultural effects of neoliberalism on empathy was the knowledge that in the same way individuals can influence and change culture, culture can influence and change us, not only behaviorally, but physiologically. This study was a consideration of whether and how pieces of the ideological paradigm of neoliberalism could potentially be changing us for the worse by negatively impacting our expressions of empathy. Neoliberal characteristics of commoditization, market-ideology, and hyper-individualism have provided an ideological framework that has disseminated rules about how we think and feel about ourselves in relation to others—rules that have placed the self above others and society. Rugged individualism, the commoditization of the individual, and extreme “me-first” thinking have minimized the emotional needs of others and have become

the latent rules embedded within our society aimed at managing both our experience and expression of emotion, including empathy.

American economist, theorist, and political advisor, Jeremy Rifkin, described man as having experienced several evolutions of consciousness over time and argues that with each evolution has come a necessary expansion of our empathic capabilities and expression (Rifkin, 2009). Today, Rifkin urges for yet another evolution of empathy. As we, both as individuals and a society, continue to navigate what it means to have empathy for others, ourselves, our society, and our world, research seeking to understand the way in which cultural ideologies such as neoliberalism inhibit or promote that empathy is imperative.

What seems a potential systematic decrease in the capacity to care for ourselves and others, if left unaddressed and misunderstood, may create consequences much greater than an increase in narcissism and a deconstructing sense of social connectedness. Our collective future may depend on understanding the forces behind our diminishing empathy and learning to mitigate its causes. Doing so will restore to those who are bound by these cultural forces the possibility to make conscious choices about how we as individuals choose to engage or relate to ongoing and future changes in culture. Therefore, further examination into what seems a systemic decrease in empathy is essential, regardless of whether the causes include the cultural effects of neoliberalism.

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APPENDIX A

NEOLIBERAL PRIMER

Part 1: Please read and think carefully about the following information. Even if you disagree, please try to consider this point of view.

Continued economic growth is one of the best ways to make people's lives improve. Many economists believe that when people go after the things they need, want, and desire, society ends up with the best results¹. Therefore, self-interest should guide all action².

Human wellbeing is best advanced by making sure people have the freedom to buy, sell and own the things they want³. Free markets and free trade encourage creativity, competition, and business. They also lead to more personal freedom and a better distribution of resources.⁴

A person's rights to work, produce, save, and consume without outside influence are very important.⁵ When how you want to spend your money is controlled, everything about you is controlled.⁵

People are responsible for the consequences of the choices and decisions they make. They are also responsible for how successful they are in life. Therefore, it is important to improve and maintain all of your skills, abilities, and knowledge.

Unemployment, inequality, and poverty happen naturally in society. They are acceptable to the degree that they are the result of freely made decisions. If an individual works hard enough, they can achieve anything.

American workers are some of the most productive in the world.⁶ They work more hours each week than others in the world's largest economies.⁶

A good education improves people's skills and abilities. Education also makes people more productive and worth more.⁷

Good students learn everything the teachers teach. They are able to enter the work force and contribute to society.

Americans have a lot of control and influence. They can vote for the politicians who support their own beliefs. They can also buy anything they want from any company they choose.

¹ Smith, A. (2008). *Wealth of nations*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

² Peters, M. A. (2001) *Poststructuralism, Marxism and neoliberalism: Between theory and politics*. New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield.

³ Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

⁴ Hayek, F. A. (1973). *Law, legislation and liberty: A new statement of the liberal principles and political economy. Volume I: Rules and order*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

⁵ Hayek, F. A. (1944). *The Road to Serfdom*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

⁶ Hewlett, S. A. (1993). *Child neglect in rich nations*. New York, NY: United Nations Children's Fund.

⁷ Becker, G. S. (1993b). Investment in human capital: Effects on earnings. In G. S. Becker (Ed.), *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. (3rd ed.) Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Part 2: Please rank the following items (1-4) in the order you would like to have them.

'1' will be your first choice.

____ Enough money to be financially stable for your entire life.

____ A college education that will give you profitable skills.

____ A powerful position in a successful career.

____ Social influence and a great reputation.

APPENDIX B

CRITICAL THEORY PRIMER

Part 1: Please read and think carefully about the following information. Even if you disagree, please try to consider this point of view.

One of the best means to human progress is to set people free from oppression. People need to become aware of the hidden ways they might be being oppressed. They need to be set free and be able to decide what their true interests are.⁸ Education is an important part of this process. It is also one of the best ways to build and sustain a more just society.⁹

Education is the practice of freedom. It is the system through which men and women learn to deal critically with reality. It is the system through which people learn about how to help transform their world. Education can help people see signs of social injustices.⁹ Schools should provide students with the ability to connect knowledge, social responsibility and democracy.¹⁰

The most basic challenge of schools is to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and power to live critically within a multicultural democracy¹¹. It is to help students recognize anti-democratic forms of power. It is to help them fight injustices in a society with economic, racial, and gendered inequalities.¹¹

Unemployment, inequality, and poverty do not happen naturally. People are not completely responsible for the results of the decisions they make. People are not completely responsible for their level of success in life. Even if a person works hard, many times outside factors make it very difficult for them to reach their goals.

Americans have very little control and influence. Studies show corporations and rich and powerful people influence policy more than the American public.¹²

Making money is very important to most businesses in the United States. This is why most Americans work more hours than people in many other countries. It is also why many Americans spend less time with their families.¹³

⁸ Geuss, R. (1981). *The idea of a critical theory*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

⁹ Freire, P. (2012). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

¹⁰ Giroux, H. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

¹¹ Giroux, H. (2003). Public pedagogy and the politics of resistance: Notes on a critical theory of educational struggle. *Educational philosophy and theory*, 35(1), 5-16.

¹² Gillens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups and average citizens. *Perspectives on politics*, 12(3), 564-581.

¹³ Hewlett, S. A. (1993). *Child neglect in rich nations*. New York, NY: United Nations Children's Fund.

Part 2: Please rank the following items (1-4) in the order you want to see them come true. "1" will be your first choice.

____ A society where people and justice are more important than money.

____ A career that you think is meaningful and that helps other people and society.

____ A society where everyone has food, shelter, education and real freedom.

____ An education system that helps build a society where everyone is equal.

APPENDIX C

**EMPATHIC CONCERN AND PERSPECTIVE TAKING
SUBSCALES OF THE INTERPERSONAL
REACTIVITY INDEX**

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter on the answer sheet next to the item number. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A	B	C	D	E
DOES NOT				DESCRIBES ME
DESCRIBE ME				VERY
WELL				WELL

1. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
2. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
3. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.
4. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
5. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
6. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
7. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
8. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
9. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
10. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
11. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
12. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
13. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
14. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

APPENDIX D

READING THE MIND IN THE EYES TEST

For all users of the revised version of the Adult “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” Test.

Enclosed you will find

- the adult version of the above test
- the word definition handout,
- the correct answers.
- A copy of the paper describing the test in full

As you know, publication details of the original version appeared in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 38, 813-822 (1997). The revised version which we have sent you was published in the Journal of Child Psychiatry and Psychiatry, 42, 241-252 (2001).

A child version of this test has also been developed and is available upon request. It was published in the Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorders, 5, 47-78 (2001).

We would, of course, appreciate hearing of any results you obtain with this test.

Thank you.

Best wishes

Simon Baron-Cohen

practice

jealous

panicked



arrogant

hateful

1

playful

comforting



irritated

bored

2

terrified

upset



arrogant

annoyed

3

joking

flustered



desire

convinced

4

joking

insisting



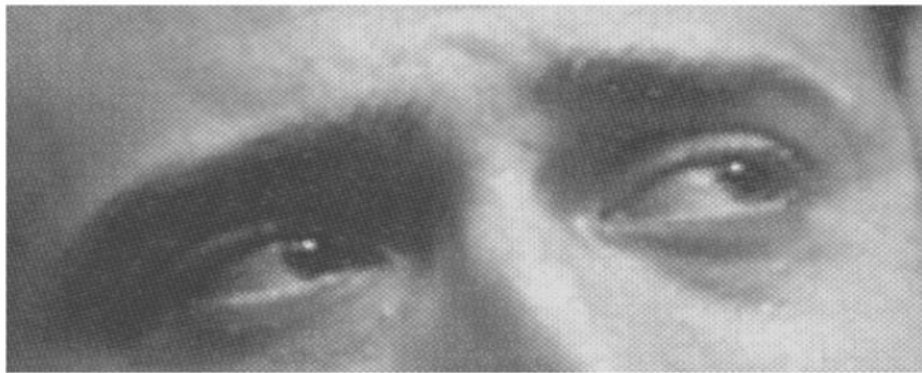
amused

relaxed

5

irritated

sarcastic



worried

friendly

6

aghast

fantasizing



impatient

alarmed

7

apologetic

friendly



uneasy

dispirited

8

despondent

relieved



shy

excited

9

annoyed

hostile



horrified

preoccupied

10

cautious

insisting



bored

aghast

11

terrified

amused



regretful

flirtatious

12

indifferent

embarrassed



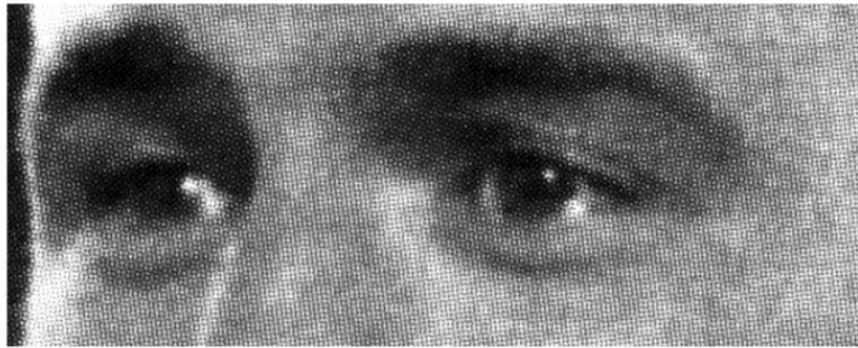
sceptical

dispirited

13

decisive

anticipating



threatening

shy

14

irritated

disappointed



depressed

accusing

15

contemplative

flustered



encouraging

amused

16

irritated

thoughtful



encouraging

sympathetic

17

doubtful

affectionate



playful

aghast

18

decisive

amused



aghast

bored

19

arrogant

gratefu



sarcastic

tentative

20

dominant

friendly



guilty

horrified

21

embarrassed

fantasizing



confused

panicked

22

preoccupied

grateful



insisting

imploring

23

contented

apologetic



defiant

curious

24

pensive

irritated



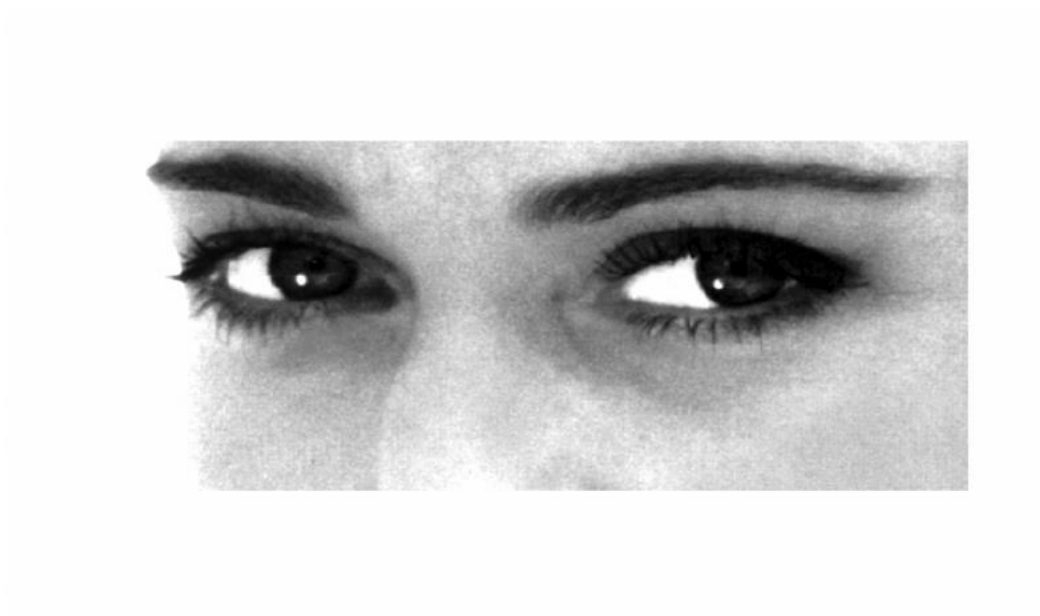
excited

hostile

25

panicked

incredulous



despondent

interested

26

alarmed

shy



hostile

anxious

27

joking

cautious



arrogant

reassuring

28

interested

joking



affectionate

contented

29

impatient

aghast



irritated

reflective

30

grateful

flirtatious



hostile

disappointed

31

ashamed

confident



joking

dispirited

32

serious

ashamed



bewildered

alarmed

33

embarrassed

guilty



fantasizing

concerned

34

aghast

baffled



distrustful

terrified

35

puzzled

nervous



insisting

contemplative

36

ashamed

nervous



suspicious

indecisive

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

6. Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular political party or affiliation?

____ Yes or ____ No

If "Yes", which one? Please circle. Republican

Democratic

Independent

Libertarian

Green

Socialist

Communist

Other _____ (please write in)

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

DATE: June 30, 2016

TO: Melissa Racho, MA
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [879911-3] Assessing the Cultural Effects of Neoliberalism on Empathy
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: June 30, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: April 23, 2020

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Best wishes with this interesting and worthwhile research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.