11-1998

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Thomas Clayton

University of Kentucky, tmclay@uky.edu

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Notes/Citation Information

Published in *Comparative Education Review*, v. 42, no. 4, p. 479-496.

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Reconnecting World-System Theory
for Comparative Education

THOMAS CLAYTON

World-system theory provides concepts and language for a critical understanding of international educational development. Within this world-system tradition, some comparative education scholars locate the educational participation of "core" states in "periphery" states' global struggle for power and resources and argue that international educational "assistance" to the periphery ultimately returns capital to the core.

World-system theory is one of many attempts in a variety of settings to understand the exploitative dynamics of class relations, whether "class" is understood in terms of groups stratified according to race, gender, or social class within a single society or of nations similarly stratified in the global milieu. As such, world-system inquiry in comparative education is fundamentally linked with critical inquiry throughout the social sciences—and with debates that take place elsewhere in that broad field. One debate—stretching back to Antonio Gramsci and emerging today in slavery, cultural, and Appalachian studies, among others—concerns the responses of subordinate actors to hegemony. Simply put, are subordinate actors "mystified" by the dominant ideology and incorporated, unconsciously, into a system that works against their interests? Or are they capable of "penetrating" that system, understanding its exploitative dynamics, and responding to it consciously?

This article juxtaposes developments in world-system theory against developments in critical thinking about class relations. While certain scholars in both fields grappled in much the same way with economic determinism and turned similarly toward education in an effort to explain the inequitable structuring of relations, thinking has diverged around the issue of subordinate-class agency. The broad purpose of this essay is to reconnect the two fields and, in so doing, to suggest an agency-oriented agenda for world-system inquiry in comparative education.

World-System Theory

World-system theory originally was proposed by Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein to explain the global expansion of capitalism.[1] These scholars trace capitalism's development from its genesis among trading families in Renaissance Europe to the present, arguing that nearly the entire world has become integrated into a single economic system.

For Wallerstein, the world-system comprises "core" and "periphery" zones that exist in a state of tension and unequal economic relations:

> The capitalist world-economy has operated via a social relationship called capital/labor, in which the surplus created by direct producers has been appropriated by others . . . by virtue of the fact that the appropriators control the "capital" and that their "rights" to the surplus are legally guaranteed. . . .
>
> Once surplus-value has been extracted, it has yet to be "distributed" among a network of beneficiaries. The structure of the world-economy permits a (primarily trans-state) unequal exchange of goods and services, such that much of the surplus-value extracted in the periphery zones of the world-economy is transferred to the core zones.[2]

Essentially, Wallerstein's conceptualization is orthodox Marxism projected to the global level. In both world-system theory and orthodox Marxism, one group (core zones or the capitalist class) is seen as controlling the means and extracting the surplus of production, while another group (periphery zones or the proletarian classes) is seen as participating in economic processes it does not control and is exploited.[3]

Wallerstein argues that the core and periphery zones of the world-economy are overlain by a "political superstructure" of "states" or nations.[4] Most theorists accept that this political superstructure corresponds

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[1] Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), *The Modern World-System II* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), *The Politics of the World-Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), *The Modern World-System III* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1989).

[2] Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World-Economy*, p. 15.

[3] For an excellent discussion of world-system theory in relation to other theoretical traditions, including Marxism, see Thomas R. Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1989). As it is similar to orthodox Marxism, world-system theory also has much in common with dependency theory. For examples of this approach, see Andre G. Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969) and *Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology* (London: Pluto, 1971). However, unlike dependency theory, world-system theory portrays international power relations as constantly changing. For instance, Wallerstein in *The Politics of the World-Economy* argues that the United States, currently a dominant core nation, has already entered a period of decline such as that experienced by previous core powers. As a result, world-system theorists do not assume, as do dependency theorists, that contemporary periphery nations are permanently locked in dependency relationships with contemporary core states.

[4] Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World-Economy*, p. 14. In addition to core and periphery states, there exist "semiperiphery" states that act as core in relation to some nations and periphery in relation to others. Today, Japan, Australia, and most North American and Western European nations have core

imperfectly with the structure of the world-economy, and the subsequent "economy-polity contradiction" accounts for the presence of periphery areas in core states (Appalachia in the United States, for example) and core areas in periphery states (Guangzhou in the People's Republic of China, for instance).[5] The choice of states or nations as de facto units of analysis tends also to obscure agency in the world-system. In fact, as Christopher Chase-Dunn argues, states are not themselves actors but are political organizations "which are utilized by the classes [and individuals] that control them to ex-propriate shares of the world surplus product."[6] The economy-polity contra-diction thus also explains why only some groups and individuals in core nations benefit from the international flow of capital and why, conversely, only some in periphery nations suffer.

Finally, the economy-polity contradiction raises the difficult question of determination. Wallerstein speaks unequivocally to this issue, stating that the political superstructure of states or nations, and in fact "all the major institutions of the modern world," were created by the world-economy to facilitate its historical development. "All these structures," he concludes, "postdate, not antedate capitalism; all are consequence, not cause."[7] The assumption that the economy is thus the determination, in the last instance, of all social phenomena has earned world-system theory much criticism as deterministic or reductionist.[8]

Hegemony and Ideology

Similar concerns about Marx's economic determinism led to a revolu-tionary reconceptualization of class relations in the early twentieth century. Writing from prison in the 1920s and 1930s, Italian dissident and scholar Antonio Gramsci struggled to explain why the proletarian classes had not, as Marx had predicted, responded to their economic exploitation by rising up against the capitalist class. Gramsci rejected a purely economic explanation, suggesting instead that proletarian quiescence derived from coercion or force, on one hand, and *egemonia,* or hegemony, on the other.[9]

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status, while periphery status is assigned to most nations of Africa and Asia. Semiperiphery states include the majority of Latin American nations, as well as the oil-producing states of Asia and Africa.

[5] Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1979), p. 58.

[6] Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Socialist States in the Capitalist World-Economy," *Social Problems* 27 (June 1980): 506.

[7] Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World-Economy,* p. 29.

[8] See, e.g., Theda Skocpol, "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Cri-tique," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (March 1977): 1075–90; Aristide Zolberg, " 'World' and 'System': A Misalliance," in *Contending Approaches to World-System Analysis,* ed. William R. Thompson (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1983).

[9] Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980); Joseph Femia, "Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci," *Political Studies* 23 (March 1975): 29–48.

Hegemony is an ellusive concept that even Gramsci used inconsistently.[10] In the broadest sense, it refers to a process of ideological domination. Except on rare occasions, Gramsci argued, the proletarian classes are controlled not by force but by capitalist-class ideas—which Marx and Engels called "ruling ideas"[11] and which many contemporary scholars refer to as the "dominant ideology."[12] Ways of thinking supportive of capitalist-class interests—about social structures, economic rights and relations, political institutions and their legitimacy, culture, religion, language, and so on—are "diffused throughout society[,] informing with [their] spirit all tastes, morality, customs, [etc.]."[13] The proletarian classes incorporate, or internalize, or "uncritically absorb" these ideologies and come, as a result, to believe that systemic inequities are normal and legitimate and that, therefore, their own poor station is right and proper.[14]

For Gramsci, hegemony complemented coercion and explained the consent of the proletarian classes to their exploitation in the capitalist system. In short, proletarians did not revolt because they did not want to, their consent to status quo structures and practices having been "engineered," "secured," or "guaranteed" through ideological domination.[15] Gramsci does not suggest that this process is simple or irreversible, however. For instance, he distinguishes between "active" and "passive" consent, the difference relating to the degree of enthusiasm with which hegemonic ideas are greeted, and he holds out the possibility that intellectuals can spread revolutionary ideology among the proletariat to counter the dominant ideology.[16] Nevertheless, Gramsci appears to have foreclosed any possibility of response except acquiescence by proletarians themselves; proletarians are "mystified" by capitalist-class ideas, accepting them and living within their

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[10] Femia; Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith, "Preface," in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971). As a result, Hoare and Smith caution against "unequivocal assertions about the aim and status of Gramsci's theoretical project" (p. xi), and James C. Scott (e-mail communication, January 1997) describes Gramsci's writings as "a Rorschach test" and "legitimately subject to different interpretations." Also see n. 14 below.

[11] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), p. 61.

[12] See Abercrombie et al.

[13] Gwyn Williams, "*Egemonia* in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 (October–December 1960): 587.

[14] Gramsci, p. 333. There is a genuine difference of opinion among scholars as to what Gramsci intended by "hegemony." Some scholars, like Abercrombie et al., argue on the basis of certain passages in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* that hegemony refers to control achieved through a combination of ideology and coercion. On the basis of other passages in *Prison Notebooks*, other scholars like Femia distinguish hegemony (as consent engineered through ideology) from coercion (consent achieved by force). In this essay, I adopt Femia's analysis and treat hegemony as ideological domination, separate from and a complement to coercion.

[15] Kevin M. Carragee, "A Critical Evaluation of Debates Examining the Media Hegemony Thesis," *Western Journal of Communication* 57 (Summer 1993): 330; John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 13; Carol A. Stabile, "Resistance, Recuperation, and Reflexivity: The Limits of Paradigm," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (December 1995): 404.

[16] Gramsci, p. 12.

confines without recognizing the exploitation they facilitate.[17] This view of the proletarian classes as "powerless to overcome their [own] subordination"[18] leads James Scott to describe Gramscian hegemony as "a kind of ideological determinism."[19]

Reproduction in Education

Gramsci suggested that hegemony operates through "so-called private organizations such as the Church, the trade unions, [and] the school."[20] A generation after his death in 1937, several scholars turned their attention toward education as the principal mechanism for the promotion of the dominant ideology and for the engineering of consent to exploitative structures in capitalist society. Building explicitly or implicitly on Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, and Basil Bernstein articulated theories of social or cultural reproduction in education.[21]

In general, these scholars argue that schools actively engage in the perpetuation or continual "reproduction" of an inequitable class system. Students are seen as forming perceptions of themselves and their possibilities as a result of ideologies transmitted in schools; these perceptions are congruent with dominant class interests in one of two ways. According to social reproduction theorists such as Althusser and Bowles and Gintis, school ideologies prepare students directly for stratified participation in the capitalist economic system. Althusser argues, for instance, that education, which he names "the dominant Ideological State Apparatus," "drums into [students] a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology."[22] Through the completion of varying amounts of schooling, students are "provided with the ideology which suits the role [they have] to fulfil in class society: the role of the exploited (with a "higher-developed," "professional," "ethical," "civic," "national" and a-political consciousness), the role of the agent of exploitation (ability to give the workers orders . . .), [the role] of the agent of repression (ability to give orders and enforce obedience . . .), [etc.].[23] Cultural reproduction theorists like Bourdieu and Passeron and Bernstein,

[17] See Hoare and Smith's and Scott's caveat in n. 10 above.

[18] Femia, p. 35.

[19] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 317.

[20] Gramsci, p. 56.

[21] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic, 1976); Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1977); Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). The distinction between "social" and "cultural" reproduction is suggested by Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1983).

[22] Althusser, pp. 149, 147, respectively.

[23] Ibid., p. 147.

in contrast, see only an indirect economic consequence of school ideologies. According to these scholars, school ideologies give currency to certain cultural practices that, "because they correspond to the material and symbolic interests of groups or classes differently situated within the power relations," support existing class and economic relations.[24]

By examining the school as a hegemonic venue and conduit for the dominant ideology, reproduction theorists made significant progress toward explaining "how working class kids get working class jobs."[25] Nevertheless, like Gramsci, reproduction theorists tend toward ideological determinism. For these scholars, school ideologies are like Sirens: they hail or "interpellate" students who, bewitched, are powerless to resist incorporation.[26] Critiquing the assumption that the dominant ideology necessarily mystifies students, Henry Giroux concludes that reproduction theories characterize people as "static role-bearers, carriers of predefined meanings, agents of hegemonic ideologies inscribed in their psyche like irremovable scars."[27]

Education in the World-System

In much the same way that Gramsci and the reproduction theorists took Marxist thought in new directions—first into the realm of ideology and then into schools—certain comparative education scholars have productively extended "orthodox" world-system theory. Moving beyond Wallerstein's economic determinism, these scholars argue that ideology plays a central role in shaping the world-system. More specifically, they focus attention on the efforts of core groups to manipulate education in periphery nations in order to disseminate ideologies supportive of their interests. From this perspective, international educational "assistance" projects mounted by multinational corporations, corporate foundations, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and universities can be seen as hegemonic ventures dedicated to the engineering of consent in periphery nations to a variety of inequitable and exploitative international structures and relationships.[28]

[24] Bourdieu and Passeron, p. 11.

[25] Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour* (Westmead: Saxon House, 1977), p. 1.

[26] Althusser, p. 164.

[27] Giroux, p. 38.

[28] Robert F. Arnove, "Comparative Education and World Systems Anaysis," *Comparative Education Review* 24, no. 1 (February 1980): 48–62, *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980); Martin Carnoy, "International Educational Reform: The Ideology of Efficiency," in *The Limits of Educational Reform*, ed. Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin (New York: Longman, 1976); Mark B. Ginsburg, Susan F. Cooper, Rajeshwari Raghu, and Hugo Zegarra, "Educational Reform: Social Struggle, the State, and the World Economic System," in *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State,* ed. Mark B. Ginsburg (New York: Garland, 1991); Mark B. Ginsburg, Gwen Wallace, and Henry Miller, "Teachers, Economy and the State: An English Example," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 4 (1988): 317–37; Francisco Ramirez and John Boli-Bennett, "Global Patterns of Educational Institutionalization," in *Comparative Education,* ed. Philip G. Altbach, Robert F. Arnove, and Gail P. Kelly (New York: Macmillan, 1982). Wallerstein (*The Politics of the World-Economy* [n. 1 above], p. 17) allows a role for ideology in structuring world-system relations while steadfastly defending the primacy of the world economy. "Core states," he argues, "may seek to reinforce the advantages of

In general, world-system scholars contend that educational assistance provides a vehicle for the transmission of ideologies from core to periphery and, subsequently, for the "intellectual socialization" of periphery individuals.[29] As periphery students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers encounter core ideas through books and other curricular materials provided by core enterprises, through interactions with core teachers posted to periphery nations, through similar interactions as scholarship recipients at core universities, or through bureaucratic interface with core educational enterprises, their ways of thinking undergo a fundamental change that "inclines [them] to approach problems, specify relevant factors, and delimit solutions in terms of a particular understanding."[30] World-system theorists are interested in how that "particular understanding" returns capital to the core.

Some world-system scholars suggest that the ideologies transmitted through educational assistance directly support the expansion of the capitalist world economy. Like social reproduction theorists, these scholars see immediate economic consequences of education. Sherry Keith, for example, examines the World Bank–sponsored establishment of junior-secondary schooling in postcolonial Jamaica. These schools, Keith argues, "were conceived with the intention of socializing the less specialized and less skilled sectors of the working class [for the purpose of] develop[ing] a controlled, well-disciplined work force" to serve the interests of core industrial enterprises expanding into Jamaica.[31] Steven Klees and Stuart Wells discuss a similar phenomenon in El Salvador in the 1960s. A secondary curriculum reform and the introduction of an educational television system, supported by grants and loans from the U.S. government, were intended to "train middle-level technicians and managers who could work effectively in the industrial sector," which was growing as a result of core investment.[32]

Other scholars in this tradition perceive an indirect relationship between core educational assistance and the world-economy. In somewhat the same way that Bourdieu and Passeron and Bernstein examine the mediating role of culture in reproducing class and economic relations at the societal level, these scholars investigate the mediating role of political, economic, and cultural ideologies in structuring the world-system. From this

their producers and to legitimize their role in the interstate system by imposing their cultural dominance on the world. [This] occurs in the form of seeking to impose modes of thought and analysis, including the particular paradigms that inform philosophy and the sciences/social sciences."

[29] Joel Samoff, "The Reconstruction of Schooling in Africa," *Comparative Education Review* 37, no. 2 (May 1993): 186–222.

[30] Ibid., p. 186.

[31] Sherry Keith, "An Historical Overview of the State and Educational Policy in Jamaica," *Latin American Perspectives* 5 (Spring 1978): 48.

[32] Steven J. Klees and Stuart J. Wells, "Economic Evaluation of Education: A Critical Analysis in the Context of Applications to Educational Reform in El Salvador," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 5 (Fall 1983): 329.

perspective, educational assistance seeks to implant particular ways of think-
ing in the periphery—about political and economic systems, on one hand,
and cultural practices, on the other—and, consequently, to draw periphery
nations into orbit around individual or groups of core nations. Once in or-
bit, economic exploitation may occur. For these scholars, however, the "capi-
tal" returned to core nations from educational assistance is symbolic, linked
with the development or maintenance of global power relations, rather
than tying in a "simple direct correspondence fashion" to specific economic
outcomes.[33]

The international promotion of political and economic ideologies
through educational assistance was most transparent during the Cold War,
when the Western and Eastern blocs competed vigorously to recruit allies
in the developing world. Edward Berman's analysis of Carnegie, Ford, and
Rockefeller foundation programming is perhaps the most thorough study of
this phenomenon. On the basis of interviews with foundation personnel and
archival research, he argues convincingly that these U.S. philanthropic or-
ganizations offered training intended to "enculturate" or "socialize" a gen-
eration of African, Asian, and Latin American university graduates toward
political and economic perspectives associated with the United States.[34] Spe-
cifically, these programs "were designed to train a coterie of indigenous ex-
perts who internalize certain norms and who are destined to assume leader-
ship positions in their respective societies. From their positions of leadership
it is hoped that these foundation-sponsored experts will move their nations
along the path to development . . . in a way to guarantee political stability,
economic growth, and, minimally, a policy of benevolent neutrality toward
the Western bloc."[35] The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union
engaged in similar activities during the Cold War, though these efforts have
not been studied extensively.[36] In fact, Berman argues, one of the reasons
that U.S. philanthropies initiated educational assistance after World War II
was to counter Soviet efforts to "indoctrinate Africa's [etc.] future leaders in
Iron Curtain universities."[37]

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[33] Ginsburg, Cooper, Raghu, and Zegarra, p. 19.

[34] Edward H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign
Policy: The Ideology of Philanthropy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 14.

[35] Ibid.

[36] However, see, e.g., Thomas Clayton, "Politics and the Modern English Language," *Cross Currents*
17 (Spring 1990): 37–48; Seth Spaulding, "Educational Development and Reform on the Soviet Periph-
ery: Mongolian People's Republic and Lao People's Democratic Republic," *Journal of Asian and African
Affairs* 2 (July 1990): 109–24.

[37] Berman, p. 133. Also see Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the
Congress for Cultural Freedom," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J.
Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1968); Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and
Cultural Relations, 1938–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Of course, the promotion
of political and economic ideologies through educational assistance did not cease with the end of the
Cold War. As Thomas Clayton points out ("The Educational Assistance–Foreign Policy Nexus: How It
Works and How Individuals Maneuver Within It" [paper presented at the Comparative and International

Core cultural ideologies promoted through educational assistance include ways of thinking about dress, religion, morality, language, and a variety of other practices. According to Ali Mazrui, the historical and contemporary involvement of core enterprises in African education has shaped universities as "cultural corporations" dedicated to the spread of "western civilization[,] tastes, and life-styles."[38] As students pass through these institutions, they are "de-Africanized" to the point that they emerge "cultural captives of the West."[39] Brian Weinstein, who focuses on the promotion of the French language in education in francophone Africa, discusses more explicitly what cultural captivity means in terms of power relations in the world-system. The maintenance of French culture and language in Africa, he contends, "serves French national interests because close ties with Africa give France more prestige and power in world bodies where it usually can speak for over a dozen countries."[40]

As several scholars argue, political, economic, and culture alignment secured in part through educational assistance may position periphery nations for subsequent economic exploitation. Berman, for example, notes that the implantation of U.S. political and economic ideologies in periphery nations facilitates "continued access [by U.S. economic enterprises] to sources of raw materials,"[41] while Weinstein suggests that France's cultural fraternity with francophone African nations "ensures for France a supply of needed imports such as uranium and cobalt [and] earns foreign exchange for the franc zone."[42] "What ought to be remembered," Mazrui concludes, "is that successful sale of cultural goods helps to expand the market for economic goods."[43]

In summary, world-system scholars examine the direct and indirect relationship among educational assistance, ideology, and the international movement of real and symbolic capital. It is important to note that, because educational assistance may be offered by national or multinational enterprises and because the ideologies carried by educational assistance may have national or transnational associations, contradictions may emerge. For instance, the Cold War promotion of political and economic ideas by U.S. enterprises bolstered the international position not only of the United States

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Education Society conference, Williamsburg, Va., March 1996], p. 1), a contemporary U.S. Agency for International Development Internet publication lists "promoting democracy" among the goals of international assistance.

[38] Ali A. Mazrui, "The African University as a Multinational Corporation: Problems of Penetration and Dependency," in *Education and Colonialism,* ed. Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly (New York: Longman, 1978), pp. 287, 307, 295, respectively.

[39] Ibid., pp. 294, 13, respectively.

[40] Brian Weinstein, "Language Planning in Francophone Africa," *Language Problems and Language Planning* 4 (Spring 1980): 72.

[41] Berman, p. 14.

[42] Weinstein, p. 72.

[43] Mazrui, p. 292.

but also of Great Britain, West Germany, France, and other core nations sub-scribing to democracy and the free market. Similarly, the contemporary work of multilateral organizations such as Unesco and the World Bank re-turns real and symbolic capital to groups in a variety of core nations, regard-less of the involvement of those nations in those multilateral organizations. Though in some cases educational assistance and national interest coincide neatly and directly—as in France's international promotion of French cul-ture and language—it generally is more difficult to trace the return in real and symbolic capital on specific educational assistance initiatives.

Agency in Education in the World-System

In 1980, Robert Arnove issued a call for world-system analyses of educa-tion. Since then, through examinations of educational assistance as a hege-monic mechanism for disseminating ideologies congruent with the interests of various core groups, scholars have progressed significantly toward ex-plaining "why externally induced educational innovations may contribute to [the establishment or] perpetuation of . . . stratification systems."[44]

In their attempts to uncover the exploitative dynamics of educational assistance, scholars have focused almost exclusively on the actions of core enterprises while giving little attention to the reactions of students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers in periphery nations. The assumption has been that actors in the periphery, failing to recognize educational as-sistance as hegemonic, uncritically accept attendant ideologies that sub-sequently facilitate their own and their nation's subordination in the world system. Mazrui argues, for example, that few periphery actors "are even aware that they are . . . in cultural bondage" to core nations,[45] and Wood-house contends that "indigenous elites willingly accommodate themselves to the cultural and economic needs of the metropole" communicated through educational assistance.[46] For Berman, periphery actors "internal-ize" core ideologies encountered in education,[47] while for Joel Samoff these ideologies "incline" them in certain directions.[48]

Like Gramsci and the reproduction theorists, scholars in the world-system tradition reject economic determinism but imagine instead a world determined by ideology. For these scholars, ways of thinking promoted through educational assistance mystify subordinate actors—they are the scales that cloud the eyes of periphery educators and prevent them from seeing the true nature of things. Giroux's critique of reproduction theories

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[44] Arnove, "Comparative Education" (n. 28 above), p. 62.
[45] Mazrui, p. 13.
[46] Howard R. Woodhouse, "Knowledge, Power and the University in a Developing Country: Nigeria and Cultural Dependency," *Compare* 17 (October 1987): 121.
[47] Berman (n. 34 above), p. 14.
[48] Samoff (n. 29 above), p. 186.

is appropriate also to this depiction of agency: as important as the work done by world-system scholars has been, it has not provided a "systematic account of how power and human agency interconnect to promote [practices] that represent both the condition and the outcome of domination and contestation."[49]

Agency in Unequal Power Relations

Scholars interested in class relations in other venues have long pursued this interconnection of power and human agency. Studies of hegemony and its responses have been conducted in "closed" societies where unequal power relations are transparent; scholars have examined, for instance, peasant-landlord relations in feudal and feudal-like settings, slave-master relations in the pre–Civil War plantation South, and European-indigenous colonial relations.[50] Studies have also been conducted in "open" societies where unequal power relations are obscured by rhetoric espousing equal opportunity; such studies have investigated hegemony and responses in nominally democratic societies in relation to, for example, the media, the workplace, and popular culture.[51] Many important studies in both closed and open societies have examined responses to hegemony in schools.[52] Beyond the social sciences, unequal power relations and subordinate responses to hegemony have been discussed eloquently and powerfully by social commentators in novels and essays.[53]

These and other scholars and commentators reject as simplistic the assumption that subordinate actors mindlessly internalize dominant ideologies and are thus "mystified about their situation."[54] Rather, scholars suggest, subordinate actors are sentient beings who recognize hegemony when they encounter it and who understand, to a greater or lesser degree, its function

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[49] Giroux (n. 21 above), p. 72.

[50] See, respectively, Scott (n. 19 above); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles L. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

[51] See, respectively, Stabile (n. 15 above); Huw Beynon, *Working for Ford* (London: Allen Lane, 1973); John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987).

[52] For example, Robert B. Everhart, *Reading, Writing and Resistance: Adolescence and Labor in a Junior High School* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983); Gail P. Kelly, "Colonial Schools in Vietnam: Policy and Practice," in Altbach and Kelly, eds. (n. 38 above); Clayton G. MacKenzie, "Demythologising the Missionaries: A Reassessment of the Functions and Relationships of Christian Missionary Education under Colonialism," *Comparative Education* 29, no. 1 (1993): 45–66; Willis (n. 25 above). Through their examinations of the reactions of students and educators to hegemony in schools in contemporary classed societies (Everhart and Willis) and historical colonial societies (Kelly and MacKenzie), these scholars in particular suggest ways of understanding the responses of periphery actors to hegemonic educational assistance.

[53] For instance, see Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1959); Ayi K. Armah, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (London: Heinemann, 1968); Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, *The River Between* (London: Heinemann, 1965); and *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: J. Currey, 1986).

[54] Scott, p. 304.

in structuring class relations. Paul Willis refers to this perceptivity as "penetration"; subordinate actors, he argues, are capable of at least partially penetrating, or "seeing through," the "official versions [of] reality" promoted by dominant groups.[55] The subsequent and varied responses by subordinate actors to hegemony, scholars continue, reflect their awareness, as well as their individual or collective aspirations and constraints.

Resistance

As scholars have moved beyond mystification in their thinking about agency, the greatest attention has been given to oppositional activities, or resistance. Resistance takes a variety of forms, the most obvious of which is overt "resistance [that] directly challenge[s] the power of the regime."[56] While most slaves in the plantation South gave the outward appearance of docility, for example, a minority "killed their overseers and masters, fought back against patrollers, burned down plantation buildings, and ran away . . . to freedom."[57] Postcolonial African literature is replete with similar violent responses by Africans to the extension of European colonial control.[58] According to Gail Kelly, teachers from traditional Confucian schools were instrumental in organizing such activities against the French colonial administration in Vietnam.[59] Though such overt resistance was directed primarily against the coercion of the dominant group, it also was inspired by opposition to the dominant ideology. Okonkwo's killing of the colonial official at the end of Chinva Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* for example, reflects his frustration both with the physical control the British exerted in his village and with the hegemonic institutions—the church and the school—they had erected.[60]

Subordinate actors also can express rejection of the dominant ideology through a variety of "everyday forms of resistance [that] stop well short of outright . . . defiance."[61] In contemporary rural Malaysia, for example, Scott notes "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, [and] slander" in peasant relations with landowners.[62] Eugene Genovese documents "stealing, lying, dissembling, [and] shirking" among slaves in the plantation South.[63] Into this same category fall "publicly rebellious acts of student behavior,"[64] such as those observed among subordinate actors in schools by Paul Willis, Robert Everhart, Douglas Foley, and

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[55] Willis, pp. 126, 3, respectively.
[56] Genovese, p. 598.
[57] Ibid., p. 597.
[58] Achebe; Ngũgĩ, *The River.*
[59] Kelly.
[60] Achebe.
[61] Scott (n. 19 above), p. xvi.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Genovese (n. 50 above), p. 598.
[64] Giroux (n. 21 above), p. 246.

others.[65] Less public oppositional activities are the subject of Fiske's and Robert Hodge and David Tripp's studies of subordinate responses to ideologies transmitted in television programming.[66]

The extent to which opposition signals penetration of the dominant ideology is not always clear in studies of "everyday" resistance. Several scholars, for example, take Fiske to task for reading resistance in acts that betray little apparent perceptivity.[67] Similarly, it is sometimes unclear in school ethnographies how "outwitting teachers and slowing down the boring routines of pedagogical formalism" or "goofing off" in class constitute meaningful challenges to exploitative stratification systems.[68] Such concerns have led some scholars, particularly in cultural studies, to challenge the tendency in discussions of everyday resistance to "romanticize [subordinate actors] by stressing the degree to which they engage in oppositional [activities] and thereby reject hegemonic meaning and values."[69] Authors of everyday resistance studies, however, argue explicitly or implicitly that the lack of focus in oppositional behaviors reflects an incomplete understanding of the relationship between dominant ways of thinking and inequitable power relations—that is, they suggest that the triviality of everyday resistance derives from a partial penetration of the dominant ideology.

Though scholars differ on the degree of perceptivity implied by everyday resistance, they agree more closely about the emancipatory possibilities of such acts. Rather than leading to liberation from exploitative structures, many scholars argue, everyday forms of resistance may actually facilitate reproduction. Willis's study of a cohort of English working-class boys is perhaps the most thorough analysis of this phenomenon. The Hammertown lads understood, at least partially, that the ideas privileged in school were integrated with the class system; their "rejection of school and opposition to teachers can be seen in the light of [this] penetration."[70] Nevertheless, the lads' subsequent marginal performance cut them off from educational qualification, limited their options for escaping lives of manual labor, and thus had the ultimate effect of reproducing existing stratifications. Genovese also comments on the counterproductive effects of everyday resistance. By stealing from their masters, slaves demonstrated resistance to the paternalism of plantation society. However, because stealing violated the slaves' own moral

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[65] Willis (n. 25 above); Everhart (n. 52 above); Douglas E. Foley, "Rethinking School Ethnographies of Colonial Settings: A Performance Perspective of Reproduction and Resistance," *Comparative Education Review* 35, no. 3 (August 1991): 532–51.

[66] Fiske (n. 51 above); Robert Hodge and David Tripp, *Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

[67] Alan O'Shea ("Television as Culture: More than Just Texts and Readers," *Media, Culture and Society* 11 [July 1989]: 377), e.g., argues that "many of Fiske's examples of 'subversion,' far from connecting to a challenge to the social order, can be seen as ways of living out subordination more happily."

[68] See Foley, p. 545; Everhart, p. 165, respectively.

[69] Carragee (n. 15 above), p. 337.

[70] Willis, p. 126.

code, it "weakened their self-respect and their ability to forge a collective discipline appropriate to the long-term demands of their . . . liberation."[71]

A final category of resistance holds greater potential for emancipation. Giroux labels activities in this category "quietly subversive[,] politically progressive."[72] While subordinate actors like Willis's lads reject the dominant ideology completely and in so doing deny themselves future opportunities, others "reject the [dominant] ideology [but] at the same time understand the need to work within social practices and relations . . . that allow them to learn eventually how to critique and organize themselves around the principles of individual and social determination.[73] In other words, quietly subversive–politically progressive actors participate strategically in hegemonic venues. Though they may appear to have accepted the dominant ideology, they are in fact analyzing it and seeking inherent contradictions around which to "formulate a critique of power" and organize effective resistance.[74] Such is the course taken by Waiyaki in *The River Between* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. At an early age, Waiyaki is sent to British colonial schools in East Africa by his visionary father so that he can "learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man."[75] Waiyaki's ultimate goal as a quietly subversive–politically progressive actor is to "uplift the tribe[,] give it the white man's learning and his tools, so that in the end the tribe [will] be strong enough, wise enough, to chase away the [colonial] settlers and the missionaries."[76]

Accommodation

While scholars have vigorously pursued resistance throughout the social sciences, less attention has been given to its historical partner, accommodation. Like mystification, accommodation signifies an acceptance of the dominant ideology. Accommodation differs importantly from mystification, however, in implying active engagement with dominant ideas by subordinate actors and careful, conscious, self-interested decisions to accept them predicated on a variety of factors. These decisions, Clayton MacKenzie comments, are characterized by a "subtlety of motive . . . that goes beyond a simple statement of co-operation."[77]

Some subordinate actors accept the dominant ideology because it positions them for wealth, power, privilege, or status relative to others. Essentially, these "collaborators" forge unspoken, mutually beneficial agreements with the dominant group or class: in exchange for political, economic, and cultural opportunities, they adopt dominant ways of thinking and encour-

[71] Genovese, p. 609.
[72] Giroux, p. 246.
[73] Ibid., pp. 247–48.
[74] Scott (n. 19 above), p. 338.
[75] Ngũgĩ, *The River* (n. 53 above), p. 20.
[76] Ibid., p. 87.
[77] MacKenzie (n. 52 above), p. 51.

age those ideologies to spread, either through promotion or nonresistance. Scott, for instance, observes that some Malaysian peasants shift ideological affiliation in the form of political-party membership "with a calculating eye to the structure of power and reward in the village."[78] In a study of Mexicano community responses to Anglo ideology in a Texas town and school, Foley distinguishes between resisters and *vendidos,* or "sellouts or collaborators."[79] The collaborators were "closely aligned with the Anglo power elite [and advocated] against . . . educational reforms" dedicated to cultural equality.[80]

Other subordinate actors accept dominant ways of thinking because they genuinely believe it is right to do so. These actors are moved emotionally by the dominant ideology, but they neither internalize it mindlessly nor adopt it opportunistically. Rather, they evaluate it in relation to their own thinking and convert to it for the subsequent sense of well-being or moral certitude that it brings. Postcolonial literature provides many examples of conversion, particularly religious. For instance, in *The River Between,* Joshua "felt at peace" only after converting to Christianity,[81] while for Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart,* "the poetry of the new religion . . . seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul."[82] Ironically, though their motives are spiritual, Joshua and Nwoye are seen by their contemporaries as collaborators because they advance in the colonial order following their conversions. In other cases, professed conversion may indeed mask collaboration. As MacKenzie notes, colonial-era missionaries often found it difficult "to distinguish between true converts and Christians in it for the perks."[83]

Finally, some subordinate actors accept the dominant ideology because they perceive themselves as having little choice to do otherwise. These actors do not benefit disproportionately by adopting dominant ways of thinking, and they are not drawn to them spiritually. Instead, they operate within a constellation of constraints that "sharply restricts their real options," and they acquiesce to power relations and the ideologies that support them because contestation is believed too difficult, its outcome too uncertain, and its consequences too severe.[84] Several scholars label this form of accommodation a "pragmatic" response to hegemony.[85] Pragmatic acceptance,

[78] Scott, p. 281.
[79] Foley (n. 65 above), p. 537.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ngũgĩ, *The River,* p. 29.
[82] Achebe (n. 53 above), p. 137.
[83] MacKenzie, p. 45.
[84] Scott, p. 247.

[85] Abercrombie et al. (n. 9 above), p. 166; Ernest K. Dumor, "Colonial Development and African Responses: An Interpretive Analysis," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 5 (Winter 1981): 296; Michael Mann, "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 35 (June 1970): 425; Scott, p. 324. Several scholars draw a parallel between pragmatic acceptance of the dominant ideology and the "dull compulsion of economic relations" suggested by Karl Marx (in *Capital* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970], 1:737). In both cases, acquiescence to dominant structures (ideological or economic) is informed by the constraints under which subordinate actors operate.

Scott argues, is "in all likelihood the [response of] most subordinate classes historically."[86]

Like collaborators, those who pragmatically accept the dominant ideology do so strategically and self-interestedly. Unlike collaborators, however, they are not rewarded with power and privilege, but merely with the resources minimally required for survival. In his study of an Appalachian mining community, for instance, John Gaventa argues that the "apparent quiescence" among miners in the face of exploitation by external interests derives from a recognition that resistance historically has been met by threats to their jobs and their subsequent ability to support their families.[87] Scott argues similarly that some Malaysian peasants' acceptance of their status in relation to landowners is informed by "their pressing material needs":[88] "Tenants may bitterly resent the rent they must pay for their small plot, but they must pay it or lose the land; the near landless may deplore the loss of wage work [to mechanization], but they must scramble for the few opportunities available; they may harbor deep animosities toward the clique that dominates village politics, but they must act with circumspection if they wish to benefit from any of the small advantages that clique can confer."[89] Constrained by their poverty, their tenancy, their responsibilities to others, their lack of political power—as well as by real or imagined coercion—these subordinate actors have little choice but to accept pragmatically the ideological demands of the dominant group or class and to "adjust, as best they can, to the circumstances they confront daily."[90]

Reconnecting World-System Theory for Comparative Education

This article has examined world-system theory against a backdrop of critical thinking about class relations. Developments in world-system theory parallel developments in this larger field from Marx, to Gramsci, to the reproduction theorists. Thus, world-system inquiry in comparative education can be seen in terms of a rejection of economic determinism and a subsequent overconfidence in the power of ideology to structure relations. The larger field breaks away from world-system theory, however, with recent studies of class relations that acknowledge the perceptivity of subordinate actors. While world-system theory remains bound to ideological determinism, scholars in a variety of fields have moved beyond mystification as an orienting principle to examine the informed responses of subordinate actors to hegemony. As we have seen, responses include overt resistance, everyday resistance, quietly subversive–politically progressive resistance, col-

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[86] Scott (n. 19 above), p. 247.
[87] Gaventa (n. 15 above), p. 229.
[88] Scott, p. 247.
[89] Ibid., p. 246.
[90] Ibid.

laboration, conversion, and pragmatic acceptance. How can we reconnect world-system theory for comparative education with the continuing discussion about class relations?

Reconnection starts with a rejection of ideological determinism and a positive reevaluation of the awareness of subordinate actors in educational-assistance relationships. In light of important work by scholars and commentators such as Gaventa, Genovese, Ngũgĩ, Scott, and Willis, it is untenable to suggest that students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers in periphery nations fail to recognize the hegemony implicit in educational assistance and, thus mystified, absorb ideologies that position themselves and their nations for international exploitation. It is much more reasonable to assume that periphery educators, like subordinate actors in other settings, are cognizant of hegemony to a greater or lesser degree and that their responses, like those of other subordinate actors, are informed by their aspirations and constraints in relation to emancipation, self-interest, and survival. Investigating and mapping these responses is exciting work for comparative education.

To what extent, for instance, does the rejection of proffered educational assistance or the cancellation of an existing project by periphery politicians constitute an act of overt resistance to core hegemony and a challenge to the structure of the world-system? Bearing in mind that challenges such as those mounted by Julius Nyerere, Sekou Touré, and Fidel Castro are rare, what opposition short of outright defiance is displayed against core political, economic, and cultural ways of thinking promoted in educational assistance by periphery policy makers, teachers, and students? To what extent do such everyday acts of resistance signal penetration of the dominant ideology? Are these oppositional activities ultimately liberating, or do they in fact undermine resisters and thus strengthen existing world-system relations? Is emancipation possible? Do periphery actors engage in quietly subversive – politically progressive resistance by participating strategically in core-supported education in order to gain knowledge and skills needed to mount future campaigns?

How do students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers in periphery nations accommodate hegemony in educational assistance? For instance, to what extent do periphery actors adopt core ideologies in exchange for wealth, power, privilege, or status? How do these collaborators then promote core ideologies nationally and advocate for existing world-system relations? In contrast, to what extent do periphery actors adopt core political, economic, and cultural ways of thinking having evaluated them and found them genuinely attractive, appropriate, or "right"? Are these converts defined by others as collaborators? Finally, to what extent do periphery policy makers, constrained by scarce resources, accept educational assistance and its attendant ideologies because they perceive no other way to provide education

to their nation's youth? How much of the promotion of core ideologies through educational assistance thus represents pragmatic acceptance of periphery actors?

Investigations into such questions will facilitate the reconnection of world-system theory for comparative education with inquiry concerned more generally with class relations, hegemony, and human agency. This agenda for comparative education does not suggest discontinuing the study of the promotion of core ideologies through educational assistance in relation to the movement of real and symbolic capital in the world-system. Rather, it suggests that that movement of capital results from a complex and dialectic process involving successful and unsuccessful resistance and accommodation by periphery students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers aware in varying degrees of the implications of their actions.