

## Chapter 3

# Neoliberalism and Education: The Disfiguration of Students

Jung Min Choi

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity...or... it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.  
R. Shaul in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The story of neoliberalism is quite familiar to the millions across the USA whose lives have been ravaged by the “financial crisis of 2007–2008,” which led to countless families losing their life savings, homes, and businesses. Commercial media attempted to neutralize the nastiness of neoliberal policies that led directly to this unseemly situation by calling the global emergency “a financial crisis” or “economic downturn,” as if these events were unfolding as part of a historical movement or a cyclical part of economic laws. Yet, it was clear that this situation was a direct and logical outcome of the corporate wilding of America, where years of unchecked neoliberal policies have resulted in the greatest wealth gap to date in this country (Taibbi 2014). The resulting scenario is *violence*—but not necessarily the type of violence that media outlets typically portray. I am not talking about muggings, robberies, or even shootings. I am pointing to a much deeper and sinister type of violence: the type of violence that can be prevented easily, such as the violence of forcing people, especially children, to go perpetually hungry in a society of great abundance; the violence of having people sleep on the streets unprotected from the harsh elements when millions of homes are vacant across the country;<sup>1</sup> and the violence of paying people such low wages that they are unable to secure basic human needs such as clean water, healthy food, dental and medical care, a decent home, affordable transportation, and quality education.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2014, there were about 1.75 million homeless persons and 18 million vacant homes in the USA (roughly 10 homes for every homeless). Please see National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

---

J. M. Choi (✉)

Department of Sociology, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive,  
San Diego, CA 92182, USA  
e-mail: jchoi@mail.sdsu.edu

© Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2016

27

V. Berdayes, J. W. Murphy (eds.), *Neoliberalism, Economic Radicalism, and the Normalization of Violence*, International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-25169-1\_3