

# Print literacy as oppression: Cases of bureaucratic, colonial, and totalitarian literacies and their implications for schooling\*

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## *Abstract*

*Although there have been many claims made about liberating, progressive, and advanced functions of print literacy, little attention has been paid to its oppressive functions. Here we argue that from its earliest days, print literacy has also served oppressive political regimes. Print literacy is neither essentially liberating nor oppressive—it can support different regimes and practices. The purpose of this article is to examine some of the oppressive functions of print literacy and to show how they are embedded within particular oppressive regimes. We consider the oppressive functions of print literacy under bureaucratic, colonial, and totalitarian regimes and discuss their consequences for teaching literacy in schools. We analyze the following three issues for each regime: how a given regime oppresses people, how print literacy facilitates oppression, and how the oppressive regime shapes print literacy. We conclude that in order to promote the liberating functions of print literacy, a sociocultural analysis of the pedagogical and institutional regimes established by schools is needed. This should involve an examination of the relations, constraints, goals, and values of school participants as they manifest themselves in activities, practices, and discourses as well as exploration of how schools might foster the dialogic possibilities of print.*

*Keywords:* print literacy; oppression; bureaucracy; totalitarianism; colonialism; schooling.

## **1. Introduction**

It is not an accident that the earliest print document known is about tax collection (Olson 1994), one of the early instruments of oppression.<sup>1</sup> Lévi-Strauss suggested that instead of being a mainspring of civilization—

contributing to the rise, for example, of city states, science, logic, or democracy—the initial function of print literacy was state control of the masses, taxation, military conscription, slavery, and so on (Lévi-Strauss 1961; Szwed 1988),

If we want to correlate the appearance of writing with certain other characteristics of civilization, we must look elsewhere. The one phenomenon which has invariably accompanied it is the formation of cities and empires: the integration into a political system, that is to say, of a considerable number of individuals, and the distribution of those individuals into a hierarchy of castes and classes. Such is, at any rate, the type of development, which we find, from Egypt right across to China, at the moment when writing makes its debuts; it seems to favor rather the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind. This exploitation made it possible to assemble workpeople by the thousands and set them tasks that taxed them to the limits of their strength: to this, surely, we must attribute the beginnings of architecture as we know it. If my hypothesis is correct, *the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings.* The use of writing for disinterested ends, and with a view to satisfactions of the mind in the fields either of science or the arts, is a secondary result of its invention—and may even be no more than a way of reinforcing, justifying, or dissimulating its primary function. (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 291–293; italics are ours)

Recently this concern has been raised again by Hall (1998), who summarized Graff's (1987) study of history of literacy: '... the most striking continuity in its history is the way literacy has been used time and time again to consolidate the social hierarchy, to empower elites, but even more importantly, to ensure that those lower in the hierarchy accept the values, norms, and beliefs handed down by the elites, even when it is not in their interest to do so' (Hall 1998: 186). The purpose of this article is to highlight the oppressive uses and functions of print literacy in today's context.

## 2. Optimistic and pessimistic views of print literacy: Technocratic and sociocultural approaches

There have been many claims in recent times about the progressive, liberating, and advanced nature of print literacy. Thus, backed by research, Vygotsky (Luria 1976; Vygotsky and Kozulin 1986; Vygotsky et al. 1993), Scribner (1968), Ong (1982), and Olson (1994) argue that print literacy provides new advanced capacities for cognition such as abstract thinking, decontextualization, systematic thinking, and formal logic. UNESCO linked the improvement of literacy with economic development, assuming that for economic growth, at least 40 percent of popula-

tion has to be print literate (Kintgen et al. 1988). Print literacy is also often associated with political liberalism, democracy, progress, and open-mindedness (Graff 1981). Freire (1986) urged the use of print literacy for political, economic, and social liberation in his famous credo about the purpose of education: 'reading and writing the word to read and write the world'. He linked the learning of print literacy to the development of critical thinking. As Douglass wrote in his autobiography of a fugitive slave, '... learning [literacy] would spoil the best nigger in the world ... It would forever unfit him to be a slave' (cited in Gates 2002: 106). Research on the development of 'fugitive literacy' in the conditions of slavery and imprisonment (Gates 1985, 1987) and educational work by Freire and his followers (Fiore and Elsasser 1982) support Freire's understanding of print literacy as potentially liberating. Dewey (1997) claimed that print literacy can bridge communities separated by distances, classes, cultures, practices, and time. There is a common belief among many nongovernmental organizations, government agencies, politicians, educators, business leaders, and scholars that economic, political, and social progress of a modern society and the individual advances of its people are closely linked with spread and mastery of print literacy (Wagner and Venezky 1999).

Recently however, the claims that credited some of the listed 'advances' to improvements in literacy have been critiqued. One criticism is that the benefits are misplaced and should be assigned to schooling rather than print literacy (Scribner 1977; Scribner and Cole 1981). Another is that hopes for improvement of society through spread of literacy are at best naïve and at worst misleading (De Lone 1979; Lankshear and O'Connor 1999). Historical studies question the link between print literacy and economic development, calling the traditional assumptions a 'literacy myth' (Arnove and Graff 1987). For example, following Charles XI's Church Law requiring every person to be able to read (but not to write), the Swedish population became highly literate, but this was not accompanied by any visible economic growth (Johansson 1981). As Graff remarks about the spread of print literacy in Sweden, 'The rationale for the literacy campaign, one of the most successful in Western history before the last two decades, was conservative: piety, civility, orderliness, and military preparedness were the major goals' (Graff 1981: 22). Even when there has been a correlation between the spread of print literacy and economic growth, the question of causality is still open (Kintgen et al. 1988). Graff (1981) cites a decline of the literate population in Europe with the beginning of industrialization (see also Gough 1988 for more discussion of independence of economics and politics from spread of print literacy). Historical studies also question other elements of the 'literacy myth'.

Lockridge's study of colonial New England demonstrates that print literate New Englanders were as politically and socially traditional as their print illiterate neighbors (Lockridge 1974). Kaestle argues that print literacy can involve both liberating and constraining features and functions: while potentially promoting open-mindedness, it also may advance conformity and social control (Kaestle 1985; Robinson 1988).

In spite of these promising beginnings, little work has focused on the negative consequences of print literacy and specifically its role in oppression. While not denying the potential positive role of print literacy, we will focus on the negative aspects in order to avoid the trap of being naively optimistic about print literacy and thus miss unintended consequences which threaten to offset the opportunities for promoting alternative education and positively transforming the practices in which print literacy is embedded (Arnove and Graff 1987). Here we treat literacy not only as a possible tool of oppression but also as a favorable condition for oppression (in the way a dark empty street can be a favorable condition for robbery).

We follow Scribner and Cole's sociocultural definition of literacy as:

A set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. The nature of these practices, including, of course their technological aspects, will determine the kinds of skills ('consequences') associated with literacy. (Scribner and Cole 1981: 236)

Thus, print literacy is situated in the practices where it is used and shaped by goals arrayed within those practices (Lankshear and Lawler 1989). Although the cognitive consequences of print literacy are real, these consequences are limited and shaped by its use in specific practices and, we would add, social relations.

Historically, culturally, and situationally, the definition of who is considered literate varies widely. Practices which are crucial in defining a person as literate in different circumstances include being able to sign one's name on documents, reading printed text and then reciting its portions by memory, understanding unfamiliar text in some literate way, or being able to critically analyze an unfamiliar text and to draw inferences and conclusions from it (Resnick and Resnick 1988). For the purposes of this article, we define 'literacy' broadly as activities mediated by texts carried through different media, such as print, oracy, dance, ritual, numeracy, graphics, and so on; these forms of literacy are embedded in broader sociocultural practices and relations. This definition helps us avoid the discontinuity and even opposition between print and other

types of literacy, especially oral literacy (or oracy), that is characteristic of adherence to another 'literacy myth' ideology; that print literacy practices and writing practices are more 'advanced' in terms of their consequences for cognition than other forms of literacy (Bloch 1998; Finnegan 1994; Gee 1996; Graff 1981; Kaestle 1985; Kintgen et al. 1988; Rockwell 1999, in press; Scribner and Cole 1981; Street 1984). As Anderson puts it, 'This is not to say that the illiterate did not read. What they read, however, was not words but the visible world' (Anderson 1991: 15).

We argue that although different types of literacy media may facilitate or hinder different processes and actions, the practices of print literacy are properly placed on a broad continuum of mediation of activities by texts (Gough 1988). This suggests that any function that can be achieved in one type of literacy medium can be accomplished, in principle, in another, but that such a translation often takes place at the expense of easy comprehension of the content embedded in the media and the efficiency, ease, articulateness, and sense of its use within the broader practices in which literacy is embedded. We might say that a text that survives for a long time in the broader practices of a culture makes sense to the people in that culture and that expressions that violate the expectations of usual practice are seldom as effective in organizing the community for its purposes. To understand how literacy practices facilitate certain activities, it is important to determine how a text survives (Lemke 2003). For oral literacy, survival of a text over time involves (among other necessary conditions): (1) ease of remembering the text (it is often achieved through poetic elements embedded in or melodic elements accompanying the text) (Le Goff 1992; Ong 1982), (2) high desirability and appeal of the text for both the teller and the listener, and (3) frequent reoccurrence of events promoting and/or requiring the text to be told in the community (Rockwell 1999). For print literacy, text survival involves (among other necessary conditions): (1) storage of the print medium (e.g., library or file database on the Internet) and (2) accessibility to the reader. It is clear that the survival over time (for a short or long period) of diverse and vast amount of texts can be easier to achieve via the practices of print literacy than those of oral literacy. However, it can be argued that the accessibility of texts for emergent unique situations and contexts (as well as the texts' articulateness) is more effective in oral literacy than in print literacy.

By claiming that oppressive functions of print literacy exist, we do not suggest that other types of literacy are free from oppressive functions or that print literacy is oppressive by its nature (Gee 1996). The oppressiveness of oral literacy in promoting racism, sexism, patriarchy, chauvinism, nationalism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and so on is well docu-

mented in educational and anthropological literature (Anderson 1991; Eckert 1989; Willis 1981). Similarly, a possible liberating character of print literacy has been described (Fiore and Elsasser 1982; Freedom Writers and Gruwell 1999; Freire 1986; Gates 1985, 1987; Rueda and Dembo 1995; Rueda and Moll 1994). Oppression (as well as liberation) is not an inherent feature of literacy in any of its forms and media. However, we do claim that print literacy can facilitate and complement a certain type of oppression, namely bureaucratic oppression, or violence through management of a populace (Foucault 1984) to a degree that no other types of literacy can (Lemke 2003). Bureaucratic oppression in its own turn can become the basis for certain oppressive political and institutional regimes (e.g., colonialism, totalitarianism, bureaucracy, and traditional schooling).

We utilize the definition of oppression coming from queer theories and anti-oppressive education where certain ways of identifying and being identified are normalized and privileged while other ways are marginalized and disadvantaged (Kumashiro 2000).

*Oppression* is the systematic, societally condoned mistreatment of people, simply because they are believed to belong to a particular group. This mistreatment includes both direct mistreatment of individuals and the propagation of misinformation about the group and its members. The direct mistreatment of individuals ranges from name-calling and threats of violence through hanging or beating people to death. An example of misinformation is 'Faggots are out to molest our children and convert them to their abominable lifestyle'. (Hamilton and Keppel 2000)

By embracing the literacy medium continuum, we try to avoid technocratic approaches to literacy assuming either technological determinism (i.e., literacy medium is either inherently good or inherently bad) or technological voluntarism (i.e., it is entirely up to the authors and audience of the texts to choose through which medium to embed texts and to effect the consequences of this choice). The perspective that we employ here assumes that literacy in all its forms is embedded in and shaped by broader practices and social, political, cultural, historical, and economic relationships. This perspective not only anticipates the critical review of any emerging aspects or consequences of literacy embedded in diverse practices but also expects a transformation of the criteria for this critique as the practice changes (Burbules and Callister 2000; Tisa and Matusov 2001). For example, successfully organized constructivist writing workshops which promote meaningful and relevant writing and self-expression for elementary school children can also facilitate and serve peer oppression as described by Lensmire (1994). Thus, how educators define success

in organizing constructivist writing workshops has to take into account this new concern for possible peer oppression and scapegoating documented by Lensmire.

### 3. Features of print literacy that can be exploited by oppressive regimes

Recognition of the oppressive possibilities of print literacy has a very long history. Probably the first known and arguably most influential critique of the nature of print literacy was made by Socrates (through Plato), who insisted that a printed text is politically and intellectually dangerous, corrupting the human mind and destroying the arts of memory (Gee 1996; Plato 1952: 156–162, 274B–277B; Ryder and Wilson 1996). According to Socrates, print literacy excludes readers from the production and negotiation of the text—there is no dialogue. The print text does not reply differently to the various audiences that engage it. The print text cannot answer an audience's questions, often resulting in the audience's regarding the printed text to be incomprehensible or even fallacious. Thus, the entire responsibility for appropriate understanding of the print text lies with the reader. Print literacy deforms speech into the dissemination of information from one to many. In contrast, in oral literacy (or, more precisely, in Socrates' ideal dialogic practice) speaker and listener have very temporary and interchangeable roles and both are often symmetrically referred to as speakers in a dialogue. In print literacy, the roles of writer and reader are stable and asymmetrical. Oral literacy involves embodied and situated production/consumption of the text, while in print literacy, production and consumption are often disembodied and decontextualized from the immediate life flows of the participants. The printed text remains materially the same and does not respond to the readers' new argument or to the writer's changed circumstances (the written text can 'bite' the writer back when his or her life circumstances have changed).

It is possible to deduce the unit of the dialogic meaning—the smallest element of dialogue that still has its dialogic property—from Socrates' critique of print literacy. The smallest unit of dialogic meaning seems to be a triadic exchange: the author's initiation, the listener's response, and the author's response to the listener's response. Of course, since a dialogue involves negotiation of meaning, it requires more than three turns. This position (assuming that our interpretation of Socrates/Plato is correct) is different from the point of view of Mead (1974) and Bakhtin (1986), who argued that just two turns—the listener's response to the author's action/question—define the meaning. From an exclusively oral

tradition, a print text (or any similarly nonresponsive 'speaker'—like film propaganda, advertisement, or a nationalistic monument) taken as a speech and a writer taken as a speaker are viewed as inhumanly stupid, implacably arrogant, and tyrannically oppressive—in short 'unwise' (the most negative judgment developed by Socrates)—because it repeats the same thing again and again no matter what people ask or what particular problems they have or how much the situation is changed—it insistently and incessantly says the same thing:

That's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive: but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever. (Plato 1952: 158, 275E)

Print text never learns from the reader. Socrates concluded that print literacy arrests philosophical inquiry, freedom, and learning and thus promotes ignorance, political tyranny, and slavery. Averintzev (1997) explains the emphasis in ancient Athens on the spoken word in contrast to the written word by referring to the democracy of Athens:

In [ancient] Middle Eastern despotisms, the written word ('bureaucratic word') had its special importance and significance; but in an Athenian people's assembly, in the people's council, in their democratically organized jury system, the fate of the state and the fate of a person could only be resolved by the spoken word (...) the importance of the [Egyptian] Pharaoh's scribes was inseparable from the prestige of the Pharaoh himself (and likewise the holiness of Egyptian 'Pharisees,' worshiping Egyptian holy books, was not separable from the prestige of the Egyptian theocracy); absolutely similarly the value of spoken word in ancient Athens could not be separated from the prestige of the polis [the democratic state]. (Averintzev 1997: 200–201) (translation from the Russian by Eugene Matusov)

For Socrates, the only ground for genuine authority is philosophical which is intrinsically the product of free dialogue testing the power of ideas—philosophical inquiry. Therefore, perhaps the greatest force for evil in regard to freedom, justice, and love of knowledge in general is a form of speech that bases its authority on the very quality of making true dialogue among its speakers impossible.

Similarly, in the Middle Ages, an opinion surfaced among Goths that printed text is unmanly and promotes a 'cowardly and submissive spirit' by teaching old men's wisdom (Cipolla 1969: 41). As cited above, Lévi-Strauss hypothesized that 'the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings' (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 292). Recently, Stuckey (1991) argued that print

literacy, rather than enfranchizing people, is violent, ulterior, and uniquely devoted to Western economic ends and perpetuates injustice. In this article, we shall continue this tradition of critique of print literacy.

It is worth noticing that Socrates' position was technocratically deterministic. He saw inherent evil in print text as inhuman speech, killing dialogic community and dialogic communication. We see limitations in Socrates' approach in that he was presenting only one possibility among many of how print literacy can function in a society. In current practices involving print literacy we can distinguish at least two more possibilities. In the first alternative possibility, print text can be viewed not as deformed speech, as Socrates insisted, but as a special object around which a dialogic (often but not exclusively oral) community can be built—a community of reader-writers (a print literate community). Similarly, Bakhtin's friend and colleague Voloshinov argued that any print presentation (e.g., a book) is an element of oral communication because it is discussed in living dialogue (Voloshinov et al. 1973). However, we see Voloshinov's statement as too optimistic (and also, in its own way, technologically deterministic). As Socrates correctly worried, print literacy can shout down a living dialogue but, we would add, to do so print literacy has to be a part of an oppressive regime (e.g., dogmatic theocracy, totalitarianism, colonialism). When print literacy is not limited to interaction between the print text and the reader, but is viewed as an object of discussion among many reader-speakers, the free dialogue and philosophical inquiry that tests ideas can again be promoted. Ironically, Socrates' critique of print literacy reached us through Plato's printed text probably because Plato successfully organized literate communities around Socrates' philosophical texts (Burger 1980: 3).

The second alternative possibility is exemplified by modern chat room communities where printed text messages between participants on a network can become a medium of communication similar (but not identical) to oral language. Printed text in chat rooms is dialogic, situated, and immediate. However, unlike oral speech, it has very limited embodiment currently enriched chiefly by the use of emoticons.

In our view, the objectionable qualities of print literacy are not inherent in the printed form of communication but rather are embedded in regimes of its use. We agree with Socrates that one form of *oppression is constituted by suppression of a freely functioning dialogic community*. We also agree with Socrates about the features of print literacy which may, in particular contexts, facilitate this suppression. (Such as its one-to-many, nonresponsive, non-negotiable, and distant in space and time and distant from personal needs characteristics.) Thus, the analysis of oppressive functions of print literacy cannot be accomplished exclusively by consid-

ering the features of print literacy and the local practices surrounding it; one must also analyze the broader oppressive practices and regimes in which print literacy is embedded. Similarly, the oppressive functions of print literacy cannot be reduced entirely to the analysis of oppressive regimes which utilize printed texts, because the regimes are shaped and even sometimes created or made possible through print literacy (Gee 1996; Gough 1988; Rockwell in press). In other words, our analysis has to focus on the co-evolution and symbiotic relations of print literacy within oppressive political regimes and their bureaucratic structures. We will address the following questions:

1. How does a given regime oppress people?
2. How does print literacy facilitate oppression?
3. How does the oppressive regime shape print literacy?

We are aware that these questions are enormously large and require a historic analysis for which we do not have space here. Our goal is more modest: we hope to outline approaches to these questions and give specific illustrations, illustrations that should not be overgeneralized.

The purpose of this article is to exemplify some of the oppressive functions of print literacy and to show how they are embedded within particular oppressive regimes rather than to provide an exhaustive or synoptic analysis of all the past and existing forms of print literacy. We also do not intend to provide a 'balanced view' which considers the liberating and oppressive functions of print literacy or the whole complexity of how people can resist oppressive functions of print literacy using print literacy itself. Our methodology has been to look through the literature and find clear, even extreme, examples illustrating oppressive functions of print literacy under three regimes: bureaucracy, colonialism, and totalitarianism. We are aware that more work needs to be done to investigate the complexity of the phenomenon of print literacy in concrete circumstances, but such analysis is beyond the scope of this article. The choice of the regimes was motivated by their use of print literacy for oppressive purposes. Finally, we consider oppressive functions of print literacy as they manifest themselves in traditional schooling where most children, in all political regimes, learn print literacy.

There is one more word of caution before we move to our analysis of oppressive functions of print literacy. While oral literacy can exist with a minimum presence of print literacy or even without it, as we know from studies of traditional societies and communities (Bruner 1990), print literacy is inherently embedded in certain types of oral literacies (oral narratives) (Gee 1996; Graff 1981; Kaestle 1985). Terms like 'pure oral literacies' (or 'traditional literacy') and 'print-oral literacies' are probably

more precise than 'oral literacy' and 'print literacy.' The oral aspects of print literacy, especially with regard to the phenomenon of decontextualization, have been noticed by researchers in studies of syllogisms (Luria 1976; Scribner 1977; Scribner and Cole 1981), classroom discourses (Linell 1992), and discourses in health and social service institutions (Engeström 1990; Linell 1992).

#### 4. Oppressive print-based regimes

##### 4.1. Bureaucracies

4.1.1. *How bureaucracies oppress people.* Bureaucracies, in which print literacy practices are often embedded, themselves are shaped by the political regimes within which they function, their histories, cultures, and the goals and functions they serve in the broader culture (Weber 1947). Bureaucracies within the monarchic regimes of the Middle Ages had very different functions than do modern-day bureaucracies in capitalist democracies. Church bureaucracies focusing on preserving its dogma and institutional forms are different from government bureaucracies that help rule a country.

A totalitarian bureaucracy that operates under the motto, 'if something is not officially allowed by the authorities, it is forbidden', is very different from a democratic bureaucracy operating under the motto, 'if something is not forbidden by the law, it is allowed'. Even bureaucracies under similar political regimes can vary across countries, regions, or positions in the means of production depending on their history and the particularities of political and economic systems.

Despite these differences, all bureaucracies have a certain birthmark. Bureaucracy is aimed at managing a population through inscription and delineation of the population's characteristics. This is performed through a division of labor between a ruling body that sets the criteria for decision making and associated categories for inscribing these decisions and clerks who inscribe the population's characteristics and apply the decision making criteria (Derrida 1998; Foucault 1984; Latour and Woolgar 1979; Weber 1947). The relationship between a person and the bureaucracy is often asymmetrical (Briggs 1997): bureaucracy has decision-making power over the person while the opposite is not necessarily true.

The role of bureaucracy in a society is often ambivalent. Bureaucracy can empower its subjects (e.g., access to formal education), promote their rights (e.g., equal employment opportunities), provide resources (e.g., financial aid for poor), protect from personal tyranny (e.g., child welfare),

ensure that the public good is taken into consideration (e.g., environmental protection), and do many other good things that might be considered essential to the survival of democratic ideals. Sometimes bureaucracy can simply be a tool for a person to get what he or she wants (i.e., to advance a personal position against the needs of a society; see Labaree 1997 for a discussion of social mobility in education). The power of bureaucracy can be limited and counterbalanced by elected officials' managing and supervising its work, by division of power, by law, by the existence of an ombudsman agency inside of the bureaucratic system, and so on. However, because bureaucracy is hierarchical by its nature, it is not limited to serving oppressive political and social regimes and institutions but can also promote and add its own forms of oppression. The basis of bureaucratic oppression is reflected in the fact that the inscribing categories are preset by the ruling body and its decision making criteria are non-negotiable and do not take into account the particular person's life circumstances.

Matusov et al. (forthcoming) describe a case of bureaucratic oppression in which a teacher administered a spelling test to a second grade African-American boy who did not yet know all letters of the alphabet (the teacher was aware of this). When the boy asked for help, the teacher accused him of cheating and of disrupting the class. When the teacher was asked why she administered the test knowing that the boy could not possibly do it and that it could be humiliating and frustrating for him, she replied that the test 'was required by the district' (implying that the school district was to blame for hurting the child by forcing her to administer the test). In this example, the teacher followed 'the letter' of the school district regulation and behaved as a good authority figure, a fearful bureaucrat who was asked to inscribe the children's knowledge of spelling in her class. Her fear was realistic—she would be punished for openly refusing to administer the test (although she could have sabotaged it as some teachers do by simply marking the student's performance as a failure without giving the test to the student). Even though it is legitimate for school districts to require information about how students are doing in public schools, it is, at least, problematic, if not profoundly immoral, to not trust the teachers who work with specific children whom the district administrators never see. By accepting the Hippocratic oath, society entrusts medical doctors with the discretion not to administer a test to their patient if the test jeopardizes the broader well-being of that patient. However, there is no analogue of this discretion for teachers who pledge their highest loyalty to their students. Society does not trust teachers with the similar decisions about their students, and this transforms them into educational bureaucrats who occasionally (but systematically) harm their

students, or into saboteurs who must violate bureaucratic rules if they choose to prioritize students' needs and well-being over the school administration's demands.

4.1.2. *How print literacy facilitates bureaucratic oppression.* Gough argues that it is difficult for large scale bureaucracies to function in absence of substantial print literacy (Gough 1988; see also Kaestle 1985; Lemke 2002, 2003). Bureaucratic regimes are well facilitated by the qualities of printed texts in the bureaucratic mediation of decision making—for setting invariant rules, procedures, categories, classifications, and inscriptions (Bowker and Star 1999). Bureaucratic printed texts penetrate and shape oral exchanges. The inscription of people's complex and contradictory real-life circumstances into preexisting bureaucratic categories and the criteria for decision making is the essence of bureaucratic work as a people-processing activity (Prottas 1979; Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996). It is assumed that real-life circumstances can be inscribed as print-textual 'cases' governed by preexisting categories. It is also believed that inscription of real-life circumstances into textual 'cases' can be done by print-textual 'rules'—a bureaucrat/clerk is supposed to make an inscription and prepare a 'case' guided exclusively by the invariant and nonresponsive printed text and its intratextual inferences (Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996; Weber 1947).

A properly functioning ('uncontaminated') bureaucrat/clerk must not adjust the categories for the inscription or the criteria for decision making (Weber 1947). A full-blown negotiation between the purpose of the bureaucratic regulation and the real-life circumstances of people—the subjects of the regulations—is not a legitimate activity for a low-level bureaucrat/clerk. Rather, these categories are set by the ruling body as abstract ideals intended to fit the real-life circumstances of all persons, 'the person' who is the abstract subject of the bureaucracy. Although the clerk can negotiate how some personal circumstances of the subject are inscribed (e.g., whether the last month's phone bill can substitute for a letter from the landlord as proof of residency), the range of legitimate negotiating power is extremely limited and differs according to the particular bureaucratic system or regime. The bureaucrat can collaborate neither with the subject of the bureaucracy nor with the ruling body setting the decision-making criteria and inscription categories. At best the clerk can advise the subject on how to better fit the inscription rules (e.g., to open a bank account) and report to the ruling body (i.e., the clerk's manager or supervisor) about problems with inscribing categories and decision-making rules. Often the clerk does not have even contact with the ruling body or this contact is strictly one-way.

The non-negotiable character of bureaucratic systems potentially puts low-level bureaucrats in a moral dilemma: the bureaucrat must blindly follow the letter of the bureaucratic rules. However, following the letter of the rules can violate the spirit of the bureaucratic regulation and harm real people who are the intended beneficiaries of the regulation (Prottas 1979). On the one hand, by following the letter of the rules, the low-level bureaucrat risks becoming insensitive and harmful. But on the other hand, by following the spirit of the rules (by making substantive, dialogic decisions), the bureaucrat risks becoming corrupt and noncompliant. Low-level bureaucrats may be active in solving this moral dilemma. *Actual* bureaucratic inscription of the clients' life circumstances *can be negotiable* (despite the system's insistence on non-negotiation) and involves the clients in creating an imaginary reality that fits the preexisting categories and rules, although this negotiation may be illegitimate from the bureaucratic system's point of view. For example, Fredin documented exchanges between social workers and their clients in Sweden in the mid-1980s (as reported and analyzed in Linell 1992: 260–262). Below is an excerpt from such an exchange where the client (C; male, in mid-twenties, unemployed, with previous drug problems) came to see the social worker (S; male, about 50) to get his monthly welfare check. At the beginning of the encounter, the client mentioned to the social worker that he lives in an apartment belonging to a female friend, which created an inscription problem for the social worker of how to qualify the 'case' as 'cohabitation' (the welfare check would have to be reduced) or as 'renting' (in which case the check would have to be increased to include the amount of the 'rent' or its equivalent). (The bureaucratic printed text aimed at inscription in the oral utterances of the social worker is marked in italics).

- (1) 9. S: That Anna Svensson—(code name for the female friend)—you know (C: yeah) Have you any ... is that someone you know or ...
10. C: Mm.
11. S: ... *your girlfriend*?
12. C: No, definitely not. (three-second pause) But she helped me out and lends me a room like, but she has, she has ren—she's helped me. She has kids like who she has joint custody of (S: Yes) and she said that if you want to live here in that case you'll have to help me out with the grocery bills. I did, didn't know that there should be some testimonial of it.
13. S: No. The testimonial that is missing is *how much rent you pay*. ((inaudible))
14. C: (INTERRUPTS) I don't pay any rent like.

15. S: You don't pay any rent? (SURPRISED TONE)
16. C: No, but I pay in kind. I pay the food and she pays the rent.
17. S: Mm, but I think it'll be very difficult like to have if it is, if it is like that, then we'll have to see later on here if you'll get the money from her to give back *to a person or two persons*.
18. C: Of course.
19. S: Well in fact it's better if we do it the other way so to speak that you decide so to speak *how much rent you should pay* (C: Mm) and then *supplementary benefit* is paid out for it.
20. C: Yeah, but I've counted on that ...
21. S: (INTERRUPTS) I mean that, that if I count, then I can't count with her or else.
22. C: No, sure.
23. S: So otherwise, so well you're quite sure you're not *cohabiting*?
24. C: Mm, no I ain't.
25. S: You're sure of that, then I can rely on that?
26. C: Yeah, definitely.
27. S: Because if you're *cohabiting*, then *we must also count* with start out from *that norm* anyway.
28. C: No we aren't cohabiting, right.
29. S: You aren't *cohabiting*.

The social worker tries to inscribe and recontextualize the social reality of the client living in his female friend's apartment into the bureaucratic imaginary reality shaped by preexisting bureaucratic categories (such as 'your girlfriend', 'rent', 'cohabiting', 'supplementary benefit', and so on) and procedures (e.g., counting 'rent', counting 'people') of the Swedish welfare system (cf. Briggs 1997; Sarangi and Slembrouck 1996). It is important to note here that although the social worker and the client are involved in oral conversation, it is aimed at developing a print case that will define whether or not the client will receive allowance and how much it will be. Also, at some point other printed texts will enter the process such as proof of residency, bills, receipts, written testimonies (see utterances 12 and 13), and so on. Without these artifacts that are grounded in print literacy, the bureaucratic practice of social welfare becomes difficult if not impossible.

The issue that the social worker faces is whether the client should get the 'supplementary benefit' as compensation for the rent or not. On the one hand, the client does not pay rent and thus formally does not qualify for the allowance (the state is trying to save taxpayers' money and spread



the welfare support evenly and fairly). The social worker is accountable to the state for saving money and preventing abuse of the welfare system by clients. However, on the other hand, often this supplementary benefit (like other welfare benefits) is not enough to pay for an apartment; as a result, welfare recipients, like this client, have to rely on their informal social networks to survive. Thus, the survival and well-being of a welfare recipient often depends on a combination of welfare support from the state and his or her informal social network. As it is clear from the passage, the client's participation in his informal social network (i.e., living in an apartment belonging to his female friend) depends on his monetary contribution—grocery money—deriving from the welfare check. This reality 'does not fit the bureaucratic categorization; it is not a case of "cohabitation", and it appears to be difficult to adapt to the "norms" of the social welfare' (Linell 1992: 262).

Apparently aware of the dilemma that the client faces, the social worker tries to help him by re-labeling, editing, and reorganizing the client's social and economic conditions within the preexisting bureaucratic categorical framework. The social worker could have said that since the client does not pay rent, he is not eligible for the supplemental benefit compensating the rent—that could have been the end of the exchange—but instead he redefines the situation, perhaps out of understanding and sympathy for the client's life situation. He cuts off the mention of a number of idiosyncratic properties of the client's real-life circumstances (e.g., the client helping his friend with kids and grocery bills—see utterance 12) and transforms the situation into a legitimate 'case' where (imaginary) rent can be calculated. The preexisting bureaucratic categories for inscription are not negotiable for the bureaucrat (i.e., the social worker in this case) and the client; however, the inscription of the client's idiosyncratic life circumstances into those categories is interpretable (although as we said above, the legitimacy of this 'negotiation' is highly questionable from the bureaucratic system's point of view).

By engaging in such interpretation, the social worker is in murky water, so to speak, balancing between defying and conforming to the bureaucratic system. He conforms to the bureaucratic system by inscribing the client's characteristics into preexisting bureaucratic categories, by following the rules, and by making sure that the client 'properly' fits the inscribed categories (utterance 25). The social worker defies the system by informing the client about negative consequences of some categorizations by displaying reasoning (utterances 17, 19, 21, and 27) that indirectly invites the client to collaborate in fitting his idiosyncratic real-life circumstances into the preexisting bureaucratic categories that will allow him to receive the additional rental allowance.

In many cases (although clearly not in all), clients of bureaucratic systems do not know how and why they are inscribed in the ways they are inscribed (see Heath 1982 for an example of such bureaucratic inscription of a working class person applying for a loan) and tend to provide all details and trust the bureaucrat to select what is relevant; other clients will anticipate relevance ('professional clients') and will tend to avoid giving too much detail, especially details one can expect to be problematically related to the whole (Sarangi and Stembrouck 1996). Whether through a willingness or reluctance to collaborate with the client, the bureaucrat becomes a judge of personal and public fairness, that is, whether the client is a legitimate recipient of the allowance or not. Through making such judgments, the bureaucrat assumes a new agency of power and decision making that lacks official sanction. The technical problem of inscription—that is, that the client's life circumstances do not fit easily within the preexisting bureaucratic categories—becomes a substantive (if not moral) problem of whether the client deserves the allowance. In essence, the bureaucrat stops being a simple bureaucratic inscriber of clients' conditions following the ruling body's decision-making criteria in the way the regulations provide. However, there are limits to how much a clerk can read his or her interpretations into the decision making process (even if he or she is following the spirit of the regulation) without being considered a saboteur or a corruptor of the system.

The clerk, guided by the spirit of the regulation based on balancing private and public interests, effectively takes decision making into his or her own hands in a way unsanctioned by the system and the broader society. If the clerk is guided solely by the letter of the regulations (i.e., by a 'literal' interpretation of the bureaucratic text), his or her actions may lead to a betrayal of public and private interests. The negative consequences of these two possibilities for the bureaucrat are different. If following the spirit of the regulation, the bureaucrat may be at peace with his or her conscience (and sometimes in support of powerless welfare recipient) but in conflict with the powerful bureaucratic system or society. In the case of following the letter of the regulation, the bureaucrat may be at peace with the system but in conflict with his or her own conscience (and sometimes with those who are powerless and those in a broader society who sympathize with the powerless).

Ideally for the system, the bureaucrat should perform his or her job 'objectively' through a content- and interest-free inscription of the subject's life circumstances into categories preset by the ruling body. A bureaucrat is considered by the authorities to be 'an inscription device' (like a thermometer inscribing temperature into numbers) and, if possible, he or she is replaced by computer or Internet databases through which either

the person requesting assistance from the bureaucracy (e.g., the welfare recipient) or the bureaucrat directly interacts. Paper forms and questionnaires, such as those described by Wenger (1998) for use by claims processors in an insurance company, are implemented by the management in order to simplify (read control) the work of the bureaucrat. The process of inscription, however, is never a seamless process; from time to time, someone has to 'manage' the computer. In many cases, bureaucrats must still try to work with angry clients who insist on inscribing their life circumstances in ways that do not fit the computer or paper form of their written instructions (Wenger 1998). The oppressive functions of print literacy in bureaucratic systems are a consequence of excluding clients from inscription and decision-making processes whether bureaucrats follow a 'literal' or 'interpreted' regulation text. Oppression, in such situations, arises from excluding the client from dialogic participation in the decisions that shape their lives.

4.1.3. *How bureaucracy shapes print literacy.* The (incorrect) underlying assumption of a bureaucratic system is that the meaning of the text is in the text itself and can be revealed through an intratextual analysis without consulting with the extratextual reality of socially active goals- and values-driven subjects (Gee 1996; Minick 1993; Weber 1947; Wertsch 1998). However, a 'literal' understanding of the printed text by bureaucrats, in contrast to their own claims, always involves an interpretation of the text but that interpretation does not involve the clients of the bureaucratic system and is often (but not always) aimed at minimizing risk for the bureaucrats within the system (i.e., *their* extratextual reality) (Bakhtin et al. 1986; Gee 1996; Latour 1987; Wertsch 1985, 1998). Critical analysis of bureaucrats' 'literal interpretations' reveals their social goals and values as well as their hidden references to the extratextual reality (e.g., career status, fear, clean conscience, institutional struggle within the organization, obligation to their own families).

Minick (1993) and Linell (1992) show that the 'literal interpretations' of texts common in bureaucratic oppression are often taught in traditional Western schools through teachers' introduction of 'representational directives', 'decontextualized language', 'literal language', or 'a transparent representational language' in the classroom (Kiziltan et al. 1990; Wertsch 1991). These types of teachers' instructions do not provide a rationale or intrinsic motive for actions required from the students. Minick (1993) described a classroom lesson in which an elementary school teacher wanted to introduce the concept of mirror symmetry. She asked children to perform separated actions with their mirrors and geometric shapes. Throughout these manipulations with the mirrors, the children

were not told the purpose of the manipulations, nor what they should focus on during this activity, nor what the teacher wanted them to learn and why. In this situation, the teacher's motive was unavailable and non-negotiable for the students—the students' motives were limited to finding the actions that satisfied the teacher (through a 'guessing game').

Bureaucratic oppression involves the management of the population governed by printed text and intra- and interinstitutional relations without participation by the managed subjects (Weber 1947). Above we considered low-level bureaucracy responsible for dealing with inscriptions of real-life circumstances of the population. Mid-level bureaucracy is responsible mainly for managing low-level bureaucrats and their accountability to upper-level bureaucratic regulations and procedures. These regulations include inscription categories and the criteria utilized in the decision-making process, all a part of bureaucratic oppression glued together by print literacy. Unlike low-level bureaucrats, middle-level bureaucrats deal primarily with the printed text and not with actual people. Their dealing with the text, in its own turn, is often regulated by another printed text shaped by intra- and interinstitutional relations. Bowker and Star (1999), for example, describe how racial categories that inscribed the population by defining Black, White, Mixed, or Colored during the South African apartheid regime dynamically changed over time depending on the country's internal and external political situations.

## 4.2. Colonialism

4.2.1. *How print literacy facilitates colonial oppression.*<sup>2</sup> In discussing the print literacy methods used by colonizers to oppress the Mayan people of Chiapas, Mexico, Rockwell (in press) describes five openings for oppression: destruction of an indigenous literacy system, using colonial print literacy as a mark of 'civilization' and a justification for colonialism, using printed texts as means of colonization and annexation of land, using printed texts for taxation and forced labor, and denial of autonomous (unsanctioned) print literacy practices for indigenous people.<sup>3</sup>

Where indigenous literacy systems had developed before colonization, colonizers tried to destroy them, forbid their use, and prevent any opportunity to learn them. Print literacy was used as a tool not only to achieve the colonization of native land and social structures, but also to colonize the spirit of the people through Christianization (Parsonson 1967; Venetzky 1999). The first act of Catholic missionaries in Central America was an attempt to destroy all pre-Hispanic books and replace them with Eu-

ropean texts. Similar attempts were made by Christian missionaries in the United States who tried to replace the newly developed indigenous syllabic literacy system designed by Sequoyah for the Cherokee tribe with an English-only system of writing and reading (Venezky 1999). Colonizers started these literacy wars because they apparently saw the indigenous literacy systems as an obstacle to establishing the hegemony of their ideology and religion. Even two hundred years after the conquest, when surviving indigenous texts were found, they were confiscated and destroyed by the Chiapas ecclesiastical authorities (Rockwell in press). Further, the Mexican Constitution of 1824 prohibited using indigenous languages for official public use. As Rockwell points out, 'those in power tend to both undermine and deny the literacy of the groups they rule or dominate' (Rockwell in press).

Colonial power used print literacy as a justification for colonialism by claiming that European literacy practices brought 'civilization' and 'education' to the colonies (Clammer 1976). Native illiteracy, as defined by colonizers, was obvious evidence of ignorance and barbarism from which European literate practices 'saved' indigenous people. Silencing, devaluing, and destroying indigenous literacy and culture were often presented as justification for imposing European culture, literacy, and cultural values, leading to symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1977). According to Bourdieu, symbolic domination is the consent of subordinated groups to the legitimacy claims of those in power. To understand symbolic domination, consider how indigenous settlers of the Cañada in Mexico described themselves after the introduction of these literacy practices: 'We didn't even know about a Bible, not then, . . . before, we were like a little animal . . . but now there is a catechist, now there is a book, there is a Bible, now we learn about the way, but before it was unknown' (Rockwell in press). Colonial language and print literacy define upward social, institutional, and economic mobility and, thus, formal education is crucial to social status in the new order. Those indigenous people who acquired colonial language and colonial print literacy could get access to the institutions where colonial power was vested (Bunyi 2001). The Cherokee developed a printed version of their language shortly before they were expelled from Georgia and travelled down the Trail of Tears that led to Oklahoma. This development was seen as a sign of advance in Cherokees, but it was hardly helpful for them in the long run as they were expelled from their lands, almost exterminated, and assigned low social status (Perdue 1987; Perdue and Green 1995; Venezky 1999). Print literacy by itself does not bring power but it is often used by those in power.

Colonization and annexation of land and other natural resources was facilitated by the use of printed text (e.g., contracts, grants, titles, char-

ters, account books, and petitions). Such writing, as Socrates remarked, was difficult to argue with—a land grant simply was; it did not argue its legitimacy or justify its own implacable arrogance and certainty; those already living on the land could not reason with it. Dialogue with the written text itself was impossible and this greatly facilitated the colonial enterprise. Those in power in the colonies controlled what was written, in what language, interpretation of the text, physical access of the text, the production of the text itself, and security of the text (where it could be found, destroyed, or changed). Backed by the brutal military and police force and by the colonial legal system, this unilateral control of the printed text led to further loss of resources. Rockwell illustrates this process in her study of the function of colonial print literacy in Chiapas, Mexico:

A visit by the Vicar of Huixtan in the early 19th century shows how writing was used to control hacienda workers, in this case, Sebastian, a cowherd for the *cofradia*. He was to account for the cows under his care, in the presence of the principals and the Vicar. As he presented them with the stones he had collected for the tally, they would add up the calves born that year, as well as the number of cows delivered to the 'justices', or sold, or used for the town's fiestas. All of this was written down in a note: 'And so that it would be the truth, they signed it with me, so that all may confirm it, all except Sebastian, because he did not know'. Sebastian was to keep a copy of the new list to present it the following year, together with his new account' (Rockwell 2001).

Not only can print literacy serve oppression; exclusion from print literacy can be used to facilitate oppression. It was in the interest of colonial powers to keep indigenous people from acquiring colonial print literacy. Print illiteracy helped the oppressors manipulate contracts and financial obligations.

'During the last half of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, Tojolabal people were driven off their land and forced to serve as *baldios* (indentured servants), tied to the *fincas* through perpetual debt. During the past seventy years, many purchased or obtained (through work or grants) land in the *Cañadas*, the deep gorges that run toward the Lacandon forest . . . bishops visiting the communities would write down their observations in the parochial books. The main theme is work on the plantations. A constant element is the existence of the '*papeles*', papers or notebooks where individual debts were recorded' (Rockwell 2001).

Pedro Cruz (Gómez and Ruz 1992: 387) notes: 'The owners are for ever holding on to the paper, all their lives. (. . .) Sometimes the paper stays that way, full, when we die, it remains, then the children go into paying'. The testimony of Enrique Espinoza (Gómez and Ruz 1992) tells of what

happened when a *baldío* drank the liquor that he was supposed to deliver in town. The *patrón* threatens: 'Ok, it's alright son, it will go into your account in the book. Three or four pesos added to your debt due to that bottle . . . if you do not know how to read, that is what the *patrón* likes, so that all of your life you will be under the yoke, like a calf. When would the *patrón* ever teach you to read!' (Gómez and Ruz 1992: 168). According to these accounts, landowners had a number of ways of preventing their workers from seeing their accounts, and never telling them how much they owed (Rockwell in press). 'It also reconfirmed the fundamental mistrust in the government's deceitful uses of writing, such as unfulfilled accords, that underlies the current insurrection in the [Chiapas] region' (Rockwell in press). Similarly, Gee (1996) illustrates that the current practice of 'fine print' used by corporations manipulates consumers and their legal rights.

Taxation and forced labor were mediated by colonial print literacy

'defend their indigenous community', learning to read and write in schools was often limited to learning irrelevant and alienated practices like choral recitation following the teacher and 'copying texts in Spanish without understanding a word' (Rockwell in press). Studying the teaching practices in South African and Peruvian classrooms, Chick and Hornberger describe the practices of *safetalk* and *safetime* in ritualistic classroom discourse that allows indigenous students to participate without any risk of publicly losing face for either the teacher or students, thus maintaining the appearance of an orderly and successful lesson without much learning actually taking place (Chick 1996; Hornberger 1997; Hornberger and Chick 2001). Under these colonial conditions, 'learning to read and write leads to loss of soul' (Rockwell in press)—students learn practices that are foreign to their lives outside school and lead to alienation from their own communities (Scribner and Cole 1981).

In sum, colonial print literacy was used to destroy and replace indige-

Due in part to the dearth of more conventional research, our hypothesis here is based on historical, psychological, literary sources. Since we are not experts on the specific countries and historical eras described here, we urge the reader to be cautious in interpreting our thesis.<sup>4</sup> We hope future scholarship will engage literacy in totalitarian settings and help set better limits on our generalizations, and more fully contextualize our thesis in historical material.

4.3.1. *Print literacy as a tool of totalitarianism.* Many critics of totalitarian regimes argue that the essence of totalitarianism lies in its ideological oppression, its drive toward total control by the substitution of its vision of the world in all areas of life. We are interested in how print literacy facilitates this control (Bukovsky 1979; Havel and Vladislav 1989; Solzhenitzin 1974; Wu and Vecsey 1996). Elkof's analysis of literacy campaigns after the Communist revolution in Russia shows that it was precisely at the time of the expansion of formal education and print literacy that Stalin drastically tightened the censorship and surveillance intended to deepen the political control of Soviet citizens (Eklof 1987). Havel defines totalitarian ideology as a special way of relating to the world through the creation of a virtual pseudo-reality to 'provide people, both as victims and pillars of the post-totalitarian [i.e., post-Stalinist] system, with the illusion that the system is in harmony with the human order and the order of the universe' (Havel and Vladislav 1989: 43). In a totalitarian regime, a common person is progressively pulled into a comprehensive and consistent way of understanding the world by formal and informal means.

The further you go—first at school, then at college, then in the army, and then at work—the more detailed and precise are the ways in which these concepts are instilled into you. Explicitly in the teaching of the history of the USSR and the Communist Party, political economics, scientific communism, scientific atheism, the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, historical materialism, and so on and so forth. Implicitly and almost in a whisper, like hypnosis, in films and books, in paintings and sculpture, in radio and television, in newspapers and lectures, in textbooks on mathematics, physics, logic, and foreign languages, in posters and placards, and even in works translated from foreign languages. Or take the news they offer you in the press or in a newsreel. A new holiday resort is being opened in Bulgaria; a typhoon hits Japan; workers in the Urals have surpassed their targets; thousands of workers are on strike in France; a rich harvest is being gathered in the Ukraine; statistics about car accidents in the USA are monstrous; a new residential district is completed in Tashkent; student demonstrations are being broken up in Italy. Abroad, one long procession of natural disasters, catastrophes, demonstrations, strikes, police truncheons, slums, and a constant decline in the standard of living; while here, new holiday resorts, facto-

ries, harvests, boundless fields, beaming smiles, new homes, and the growth of prosperity. *There* the black forces of reaction and imperialism are grinding the faces of the workers and threatening us with war; *here* the bright forces of progress and socialism are building a radiant future and battling for a stable peace. And the forces of peace, socialism, and progress are bound to prevail. There is nothing else *at all*—nothing against. Even when you are traveling by train and gazing absentmindedly at the landscape speeding past, your eyes unconsciously scan and your brain assimilates—the slogans spelled out in stones and broken bricks on either side of the track: 'Peace to the World!' 'Lenin Lives!' 'Forward to the Victory of Communism!' (Bukovsky 1979: 60–61)

Any issue, even an issue that has apparently nothing to do with politics, is driven by totalitarianism's drive to control into the realm of political (and even moral) loyalty to the regime. As the leader of Italian fascists Benito Mussolini declared, 'nothing above the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state' (Mosse 2000). Everything is permeated by the official state ideology and everything is reduced to that which supports the official ideology (for example, the sad destruction of work in the fields of cybernetics, poetry, genetics, education, and linguistics as 'bourgeois', was personally instigated by Stalin in the USSR) (Solzhenitzin 1974). Although the 'domesticating power of propaganda' (Freire 1976) is common in many political and institutional regimes, in totalitarianism, due to its monopoly on propaganda and the unconstrained range of areas in which the official ideology needs be unchallenged if its pseudo-reality is to be sustained, such propaganda becomes a leading venue of oppression.

In a totalitarian regime, everybody is under suspicion of disloyalty to the regime and everyone has to constantly prove not only their loyalty but also their excitement and genuine commitment to the totalitarian regime. Havel considers an example of a greengrocer in Communist Czechoslovakia who, in a window of his store, displayed a poster with the political slogan 'Workers of the world, unite!' Havel shows that the greengrocer did not believe in the slogan and did not particularly care about its direct meaning. The function of the slogan was ritualistic and not meant to refer to any direct meaning. Instead it was about reducing the greengrocer's fear of being accused of disloyalty to the Communist regime and about visibly building a pseudo-reality of his enthusiasm for the regime. Havel argues that others—shoppers in the grocery store or street passers-by—do not even need to read the slogan displayed by the greengrocer to get its subliminal message reminding them of 'where they are living and what is expected from them' (Havel and Vladislav 1989: 51).

Bukovsky (1979) convincingly demonstrates that participation in totalitarian ideology puts difficult demands on common people because it

is dangerous to accept ideological pseudo-reality as *the* reality and it is dangerous to reject it. It is dangerous to behave as if the pervasive totalitarian ideological statements are true. Soviet leaders claimed, for example, that the USSR was the freest country in the world but if a Soviet citizen tried to act out this ideal he or she was immediately persecuted as an enemy of the people and the state. Bukovsky shares the following then-popular Soviet joke illustrating this point:

The teacher at [a Soviet] nursery school is giving the children a little talk. She hangs a map of the world on the wall and explains: 'Look, children, here is America. The people there are very badly off. They have no money, therefore they never buy their children any candy or ice cream and never take them to the movies. And here, children, is the Soviet Union. Everybody here is happy and well off, and they buy their children candy and ice cream every day and take them to the movies'. Suddenly one of the little girls bursts into tears. 'What's the matter, Tania, why are you crying?' 'I want to go to the Soviet Union,' sobs the little girl. (Bukovsky 1979: 62)

Bukovsky comments that this little girl Tania is in trouble because she cannot see the difference between the ideological pseudo-reality and the reality itself. This phenomenon of 'double speak', 'double thought', and 'double world' has been well-described by Orwell in his totalitarian anti-utopia *1984* (Orwell 1992).

To be a 'successful' citizen of a totalitarian regime, one needs to keep the ideological and actual realities separate but coordinated. This coordination is very tricky and rather painful for the citizen of a totalitarian regime. Bukovsky argues that people living under a totalitarian regime are often engaged in exhaustive and silent internal dialogue with propaganda texts around them, 'What are you talking about?! Look around, what you are saying is fiction!' Through this internal dialogue a person notices and acknowledges the difference between the ideological pseudo—and actual realities. Furthermore, to behave in a smart and safe way, he or she must suppress the ideological pseudo-reality as a rationale for actions (e.g., 'The USSR is the freest country in the world') and act out of the actual reality (e.g., his or her own fear of the totalitarian authorities). However, openly acting out of this actual reality is dangerous because the actual reality is in a conflict with the ideological pseudo-reality (e.g., the person acts out the fear and not out of being free as Soviet propaganda claims!) and, thus, the person must pretend that his or her actions are guided by the ideological pseudo-reality. Then, in its own turn, this pretense, if noticed, becomes dangerous as well because it undermines totalitarian control (e.g., who is in control—the person manipulating the system by pretending or the totalitarian authorities?). This new danger forces individuals to try to convince, or perhaps deceive,

themselves and others that they are free agents freely choosing to do what the totalitarian authority desires. Finally, the person is safe but at the price of his or her own constant fear, pretense, and deceit.

This constant internal violence—a consequence of saying one thing and acting out of a different understanding—is the basis of ideological oppression within the totalitarian regime (Havel and Vladislav 1989). As Havel pointed out, both victims and the pillars of totalitarian regime are subjects and co-participants in their own and other people's ideological oppression. In a sense everyone, including the regime's leaders, is a slave of the totalitarian system (Bukovsky 1979).

4.3.2. *How print literacy facilitates totalitarian oppression.* One of the first reforms that totalitarian political regimes with predominantly print illiterate populations enacted when they came to power in the twentieth century was to eradicate illiteracy. Regardless of their political orientations, these totalitarian regimes pushed forward mass literacy programs as soon as they consolidated power (or even during their struggle for power as in Communist Russia). Fascist Italy (Padellaro 1930; Tomasi 1982), Fascist Spain<sup>5</sup> (Delgado 1992; Escolano 1992; Viñao 1990; Viñao and Moreno 1994), Communist Russia (Eklof 1987; Kenez 1982; Shadrnikov and Pakhomov 1999; Trotsky 1972), Communist Cuba (Kozol 1978; Leiner 1987), Communist China<sup>6</sup> (Cleverley 1991; Hayford 1987; Rawski 1979; Scribner 1982), Communist Nicaragua (Arrove 1980; Miller 1985), and Communist Vietnam (Arrove and Graff 1987) all initiated major literacy campaigns. All these countries had some lower level print literacy before the development of totalitarian regimes—they did not start from scratch—and print illiteracy was not fully eliminated under any totalitarian regime. There were many extravagant official claims about the extremely rapid elimination of print illiteracy. For example, according to the official Nicaraguan statistics of those days, print illiteracy was reduced from 40% to 13% in two months (Miller 1985). Often, actual advances in promoting print literacy were more modest than the regimes claimed, although all made very aggressive pushes to eradicate illiteracy (Arrove and Graff 1987). Militarist Japan and Nazi Germany are not on this list because these countries had achieved high levels of print literacy before their development as totalitarian states. Japan became a predominantly literate state as a result of the Great Doctrine campaign of the Meiji government (1868); this campaign used literacy and schooling to develop Japanese nationalism (Dore 1965) (see also Anderson 1991 for more discussion of the role of print literacy for building nationalism). Germany had also reached a high level of print literacy long before the Nazis came to power in 1933 (Kaestle 1985).

What is the role of print literacy in ideological oppression? As a medium, print literacy in totalitarian states has been a means of propaganda disseminated mainly through the use of posters, newspapers, and books. Print literacy was not necessarily the favorite medium of famous totalitarian propagandists. Lenin, for instance, prioritized cinema ('out of all arts film is the most powerful weapon') and the chief of German Nazi propaganda Goebbels insisted on the spoken word as the most effective propaganda medium. However, both totalitarian leaders used print-based propaganda mainly to mobilize their followers (where engendering a performance is often more important than the meaning of the message itself) and less for the ideological oppression described above, which was a by-product rather than the deliberate goal of their print propaganda. In our view, Lenin and Goebbels simply overlooked the role of print literacy in ideological oppression. The foundational insights of Socrates point to the anti-dialogic aspects of reading and writing that are potentially valuable in creating the monolithic pseudo-reality sought by these regimes; Socrates emphasizes that written word is unresponsive to dialogic interrogation in ways that restrict even the possibility of alternatives from arising (Plato 1952). But beyond that, the written word is also the first one-to-many mass medium—even if it does not share other characteristics of film or mass meetings that totalitarian theorists found valuable. The aspect of print literacy that makes fiction possible—its ability to create alternate worlds in which readers imaginatively participate—can also be used to foster the totalizing goals of some authoritarian regimes.

Of course, in totalitarian countries there were many reasons for the urgent promotion of mass print literacy, such as industrialization, modernization, bureaucratization, defense of the country, and militarization of national economies—all common characteristics of functioning totalitarian regimes. For all these purposes involving transforming the economies of totalitarian countries, print literacy was very important. Usually during totalitarian literacy campaigns, print literacy was associated by the regimes with political, social, and economic 'critical liberation' from all other ideologies (see, for example, Figures 1, 2, and 3). Literacy campaigns often had a forced, rapid, and even violent character which has become almost the birthmark of totalitarian literacy campaigns in contrast to literacy campaigns under more democratic regimes (Eklof 1987; Hayford 1987).

Totalitarian regimes often proclaimed political, ideological, and economic 'freedom', 'critical thinking', and 'liberation' as main goals of print literacy, even using critical theories of liberation by Marx and Freire as in the Soviet Union (Marx), China (Marx), Cuba (Marx, Freire), Nicaragua (Marx, Freire), and other countries. However, in all these cases



Designer unknown, 1920

*Literacy is the path to communism*

Publisher: Gosizdat, Moscow

(Lithography, 72x54 cm., inv.nr. BG E11/746)

In its first years, the communist regime organized extensive campaigns to combat illiteracy. This poster uses the classical winged horse Pegasus as a distributor of knowledge. The text in the book reads 'Proletarians of all countries, unite!' On the bottom, near the emblem of Communist Russia, it says, 'Literacy is the path to communism'. In the background, there are symbols of prosperous society: cities and smoking factories. The art theme is borrowed from Russian Orthodox icons... <http://www.iisg.nl/exhibitions/chairman/sov09.html> (reprinted with permission from International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

Figure 1.



### Aleksei Radakov, 1920

*The life of the illiterate — The life of the literate*

Publisher: Gosizdat, St. Petersburg

(Lithography, 51x68 cm., inv.nr. BG E11/742)

The illiterate farmer, at top, has a poor harvest. His cow dies; he does not know the way in town and dies in poverty, leaving a young child. The literate farmer has read how to improve his harvest and knows where to buy a good cow. When he dies, his son is older and able to take over the farm. Note the bookshelf in the last picture. <http://www.iisg.nl/exhibitions/chairman/sov10.html> (reprinted with permission from International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

Figure 2.

'freedom', 'liberation', and 'critical thinking' were strictly limited by official state totalitarian ideology and often were aimed against the previously defeated regime. The alternate world to which citizens were expected to show allegiance was ideologically defined, and we call the associated practices that were intended to enforce that allegiance 'ideological oppression'. Studying literacy campaigns in totalitarian countries, we have

found no evidence of critical thinking or critique of the ruling regime or its features. A famous German Nazi propagandist Dietz wrote,

Its [literacy's] task is to free those who today still are rooted and anchored in the foreign ideas of liberalism and Marxism, to make them feel, think and act according to National Socialism, to bring them to the point where they judge and evaluate everything according to National Socialist principles. The sole task of the propagandist today is to support the will and policy of the government and to help anchor its laws in the people. (Dietz 1934: 299)

In Communist Russia, immediately after the Communist revolution of 1917, Lenin insisted that the 'illiterate person stands outside politics. First it is necessary to teach the alphabet. Without it, there are only rumors, fairy tales, prejudices, but not politics' (cited in Kenez 1982: 175). In Nicaragua, concerns about the propaganda-like nature of their 'Literacy Crusade' were dismissed as not 'critical'. 'The most common criticisms of the literacy materials are not those of scholarship but of ideology. The most vocal opposition has been directed at the pro-FLSN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) content of the literacy crusade. Those who object to political propagandizing as part of the literacy process are apparently ignorant of the indoctrination that occurs in all education systems' (Arnové 1980: 705). In Communist China, the 'march on literacy' was initiated by the Communist Party immediately after the victory of the Communist revolution and was aimed at spreading its ideology among the population. 'It was claimed that army men using Ji's [phonetic] system had learned sufficient characters in six months to read *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*' (Cleverley 1991: 119).

For [Chinese] Communists, [literacy] reform is needed to serve the demands for the mass information and mass propaganda among the people and to further the cause of the continuing Communist revolution and of the realization of the true Communist society. Education, schooling at all levels, and the cultural and scientific activities of the masses must be communistic: they are integral and inseparable parts of the whole economic and political framework of Communism. (Serruys 1962: 57)

We want to attract attention to the specifics of the role of print literacy in totalitarian oppression, namely in establishing ideological oppression. Studying the work of Bakhtin, Holoquest nicely described this ideological oppression supported by totalitarian print literacy:

Another pathology of language is 'official discourse', at its purest a utopian language so compelling that no one would speak anything else. Official discourse in its most radical form resists communication: everyone is compelled to speak the same language (outer speech is all). It is a collective version of the mysterious disability called autism, victims of which cannot communicate with others





La labor de propaganda y captación a través de carteles, octavillas, pasquines, murales, cintas magnetofónicas, películas, eslógans e informaciones periódicas en prensa, radio y televisión, así como el propio diálogo directo ha estado siempre presente.

Franco's posters about spreading literacy (1940s)

On the right you can read: 'The illiterate is condemned to ignorance'.  
 On the left of this is written: 'To teach who do not know'.  
 In the middle is written: 'Who does not know is like one who cannot see'.  
 (Escolano 1992: 117)

Figure 3.

because they (apparently) are not aware of them; or in other words, the individual exhausts the space of society (inner speech is all). Official discourse is autism for the masses. That is, extreme versions of official discourse are similar to autism in so far as they are totalitarian and do not recognize otherness: they abhor difference and aim for a single, collective self. This is why totalitarian societies seek a return to some primordial *Gemeinschaft*. Extreme versions of official discourse are totalitarian precisely to the degree that they assume no other selves beyond the one they posit as normative. In the totalitarian state, language seeks to drain the first person pronoun of all its particularity. Pathology provides examples of over-determined inner speech; history is full of examples of the over-investment in outer speech that results in the absolute language of totalitarian states. Official languages, even those that are not totalitarian, are masks for ideologies of many different kinds, but they all privilege *oneness*; the more powerful the ideology, the more totalitarian (monologic) will be the claims of its language. Extreme versions of such language would be religious systems and certain visionary forms

of government that have as their end that prelapsarian condition in which words are not necessary. Speech falls away because—in the state such ideologies wish to underwrite—no mediation is necessary since everyone's thought is in step with everyone else's. There is no difference between individual and society. Of course, such an extreme monologism is both theoretically and practically impossible: dialogism is a realism (Holquist 1990: 52–53).

Unlike authoritarian, dictatorial regimes (e.g., many South American countries in the 1970s) where physical violence is direct (where soldiers might be sent to physically suppress disobedient peasants), in totalitarian regimes, physical violence, often performed by secret police, is mediated by ideological oppression. Since totalitarian ideology is text-based (text in the broad sense as discussed at the beginning of our article), totalitarian regimes are often concerned about providing access to the text of its propaganda for the population. The regime cares about establishing schools and teaching print literacy. Meanwhile, authoritarian regimes that use print literacy simply for organizational, bureaucratic purposes often have suspicions of schooling, literacy and education, fairly seeing them as organizational tools that can be dangerous in the hands of the oppressed (Freire 1986). In sum, simply authoritarian regimes are afraid of printed text while totalitarian regimes embrace printed text.

4.3.3. *How totalitarianism shapes print literacy.* We argue here that the power of print literacy to facilitate ideological oppression lies in its potential to 'liberate' a reader's thinking from his or her lived reality (Vygotsky and Kozulin 1986). In this vein, the Nazi philosopher Spengler insisted that print literacy 'implies a complete change in the relations of man's waking consciousness, in that it liberates it from the tyranny of the present; . . . the activity of writing and reading is infinitely more abstract than that of speaking and hearing' (Spengler and Atkinson 1939: 149). Print literacy may liberate citizens from the 'tyranny of the present', but that very liberation can also support the creation of a totalitarian ideology. Printed text affords the reader an extended space within which to think, but that thinking takes place in reference to the textual reality, regardless of its correspondence to the actual world. This process is often referred as 'decontextualization' (Wertsch 1985) because printed words 'are isolated from the fuller context in which spoken words come into being' (Ong 1982: 101). Vygotsky (Vygotsky and Kozulin 1986) and Olson (1994) saw decontextualization as an inherent by-product of print literacy. They also viewed decontextualization in a positive light, as empowering readers with the skills of abstract thinking and reflection.

Following pioneering work by Scribner and Cole (1981) based on their research in Africa and their definition of literacy as embedded in specific

contexts, practices, and social relations, we see 'decontextualization' as something of a misnomer. We agree with Linell (1992) and Scribner (1977), who argue that 'decontextualization'—prioritizing intratextual formalism over its extratextual meaning—is more precisely a process of situating meaning in a particular, historically privileged, context—but when we call that meaning 'decontextualized' we point to the way it is situated in specific practices and social relations that privilege intratextual formalism. Linell (1992) emphasizes that 'decontextualization' involves creating and supporting practices and social relations that lead to an imaginary social 'reality' which operates as an alternative to the real-life experiences, activities and relations of the users of the printed text. 'Decontextualization' (and its imaginary reality) is neither inherently positive nor an exclusive attribute of print literacy, nor is it the only requirement for abstract thinking and reflection. Nevertheless, it appears that print literacy can facilitate the use of decontextualization as no other medium can, due to the material stability of the text message—as the powerful phenomena of written fiction illustrates. This analysis parallels Socrates' assertion that the peculiar power of written texts arises, perversely, out of its inability to respond to the reader. Thinking shaped by the printed text (intratextual formalism) and in opposition to the lived life (extratextual meaning) can be easily utilized for the purposes of ideological oppression under a totalitarian regime.

The phenomenon of decontextualization promoted by print literacy was studied by Vygotsky and Luria in the early 1930s (Luria 1976). The political context of this study was the beginning of collectivization by Stalin in the early 1930s in the Soviet Union. Collectivization involved taking peasants' private property mainly by force (using the secret police and army) and organizing large 'collective' agricultural enterprises run by Communist party functionaries or their proxies. This traumatic collectivization led to the loss of about twenty million peasant lives through killings, mass concentration camps, and organized famine (Solzhenitzin 1974). Stalinist collectivization often went hand-in-hand with forced 'schoolization' of rural, and especially non-Russian, populations (Eklof 1987). Of course, this political context was probably not fully known by Vygotsky and Luria at that time. Vygotsky developed his 'culturo-historical' Marxist approach to psychology, according to which individual cognition changes (e.g., understanding formal logic) when ways of organizing production change (e.g., participation in newly formed collective farms). To check this theoretical claim, Vygotsky and Luria developed a battery of psychological tests to apply to unschooled subjects and the newly collectivized and newly schooled subjects (Veer and Valsiner 1991).

Luria asked unschooled, print illiterate Uzbeks from a remote village in Soviet Central Asia to draw a conclusion from a syllogism's premises and then compared their answers with responses of print literate Uzbeks.

- (2) [Syllogism] [Major premise] In the Far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. [Minor premise] Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. [Conclusion] What color are the bears there?
1. P [an old Uzbek peasant from a remote village who had never attended school and was print illiterate]: . . . We always speak only of what we see; we don't talk about what we haven't seen.
  2. E: . . . But what do my words imply? [The syllogism is repeated.]
  3. P: Well, it's like this: our tsar isn't like yours, and yours isn't like ours. Your words can be answered only by someone who was there, and if a person wasn't there he can't say anything on the basis of your words.
  4. E: . . . But on the basis of my words—in the North, where there is always snow: the bears are white, can you gather what kind of bears there are in Novaya Zemlya?
  5. P: If a man was sixty or eighty and had seen a white bear and had told about it, he could be believed, but I've never seen one and hence I can't say. That's my last word. Those who saw can tell, and those who didn't see can't say anything! (At this point a young Uzbek [who was print literate and attended school for political activists] volunteered, 'From your words it means that bears there are white.')
  6. E: Well, which of you is right?
  7. P: What the cock knows how to do, he does. What I know, I say, and nothing beyond that!
- (Luria 1976: 108–109) (inclusions ours)

Luria noted that when the print illiterate subjects were asked to make judgments and to draw implied conclusions about their immediate practical experience, their reasoning and deduction followed perfectly the rules of the logic. However, many of them refused to accept the premises of the syllogisms as the beginning point of reasoning; they treated the premises as a message about a specific event or phenomenon rather than 'abstract', 'universal' statements, and they considered the syllogism a set of independent statements that shared the same topic rather than as a unified logical task. Based on these findings, Luria concluded, 'the process of reasoning and deduction associated with immediate practical experience dominates the responses of our nonliterate subjects' (cited in Wertsch 1985: 35).

However, Scribner (1977) argued that the unwillingness of some print illiterate people to treat syllogisms as logical problems should not be confused with their failure to think hypothetically. She quoted one print illiterate participant in her own experiments in Liberia (West Africa) who explained his reason for rejecting a syllogism-based question: 'If you know a person, if a question comes up about him, you are able to answer' (Scribner 1977: 490). Scribner suggested that this print illiterate person reasoned hypothetically about the practical situation while denying the possibility of reasoning hypothetically about information of which he had no experience. In fact, all four responses of the old Uzbek peasant 'P' from the example are full of assumptions that reasoning should be based on either first-hand experience or on the word of a reliable, experienced person (RoGoff 1990).

Moreover, it has been shown that the syllogisms can be contextualized in a way to become understandable logical problems for nonschooled, print illiterate participants. Cole, Gay, Glick, and Sharp (Cole et al. 1971) replicating Luria's finding in Liberia demonstrated that nonschooled, print-illiterate participants of the psychological experiments with syllogisms had much less difficulty when they were asked to simply evaluate the truth of conclusions stated by the experimenter on the basis of premises or asked to predict how a 'fool' would do the inference. In a way, these findings support Luria's claims that without the referential contextualization, many unschooled, print illiterate people have difficulty drawing the certain conclusion that a syllogism demands; however, these findings undermine Luria's conclusion that they are unable to thinking in abstract or hypothetical ways.

Luria was sent to Uzbekistan to demonstrate the advances of decontextualization (and, indirectly, to justify the need for formal education there) (Daniell 1990). Probably unwillingly, he was an agent of totalitarian decontextualization. It is interesting that Luria either could not see or could not acknowledge (as he was still working under the Soviet totalitarian regime) that decontextualization could easily be used by the regime. The elderly print-illiterate, unschooled Uzbek seemed to have more political awareness and courage than his interrogator when he directly referred to the political regime under which the syllogisms operate ('our tsar isn't like yours, and yours isn't like ours') and then indirectly calling the local young political activist a 'cock' for being arrogant (that word, like its English equivalent, has two meanings: 'rooster' and 'penis'). Luria was asking his questions during Stalin's brutal collectivization of the early 1930s that took about twenty million peasant lives. Other oppressive regimes may also use decontextualization in shaping print literacy but its role there is different than in totalitarianism. For example, the bureau-

cratic decontextualization described above is aimed at managing people through the inscription of the managed people's circumstances by applying preexisting categories and rules. Meanwhile, totalitarian decontextualization is aimed at creating ideological oppression within the people through imposing 'the second reality' that guides their actions and relations with other people.

Studying how the Soviet oppressive machine operated, Solzhenitzen made an important observation. He noticed that schooled, print-literate people cooperated more with Soviet secret police during interrogations than unschooled, print-illiterate people because they tried to be 'coherent and logical' in a decontextualized sense:

[Speaking as an interrogator:] And you [i.e., school educated intellectual] testify: We were talking [with your friend B] about collective farms—to the effect that not everything had as yet been set to rights on them but it soon would be. We talked about the lowering of piece rates . . . And what in particular did you say about them? That you were delighted they had been reduced? But that wasn't the way people normally talked—it was too implausible. And so as to make it seem an altogether believable conversation, you concede that you complained just a little that they were putting on the squeeze a bit with piece rates.

The interrogator writes down the deposition himself, translating it into *his own* language [i.e., inscription into totalitarian ideology and totalitarian bureaucracy of the secret police]: At this meeting we slandered Party and government policy in the field of wages.

And someday [your friend] B is going to accuse you: 'Oh, you blabber-mouth, and I said we were making plans to go fishing.'

But you tried to outsmart your interrogator! You have a quick, abstruse mind. You are an intellectual! And you outsmarted yourself . . .

In [Dostoevsky's] *Crime and Punishment*, [interrogator] Porfiri Petrovich makes a surprisingly astute remark to the man he suspected to be Raskolnikov, that he could have been found out only by someone who had himself gone through that same cat-and-mouse game, implying, so to speak: 'I don't even have to construct my own version with you intellectuals. You will put it together yourselves and bring it to me all wrapped up.' Yes, that's so! An [schooled, print literate] intellectual cannot reply with the delightful incoherence of [the title character in] Chekhov's 'Malefactor.' He is bound to try to build up in logical form the whole story he is being accused of, no matter how much falsehood it contains.

But the interrogator-butcher isn't interested in [decontextualized] logic; he just wants to catch two or three phrases. He knows what he wants. And as for us—we [i.e., school educated people] are totally unprepared for anything. (Solzhenitzin 1974: 120–121) (inclusions are ours)

As Etkind (Emerson 1997: 148; Etkind 1996: 296) points out, during interrogations, Soviet secret police were only interested in developing a written confession of the accused; all other extra-verbal and extra-print-

literacy reality did not exist. The specifics of the involved situations, feelings, meanings, truthfulness, forced conditions of the 'confession', and so forth did not matter. All that mattered was building a case that could please the interrogators' direct and indirect bosses. The accused simply provided 'material'—a few incriminating words or details—for the interrogators' masterful case-building. A 'good', 'easy' accused was one who collaborated in case-building by following the formal decontextualized logic of the interrogator. In contrast to print illiterates, school educated, print literate people were especially 'good' in following the interrogator's decontextualized (but frightening) logic.

In Chekhov's story *Malefactor*, a print-illiterate, unschooled peasant Denis (like the elderly Uzbek in Luria's experiment) was accused of taking nuts from the railroad bed to use as sinkers for fishing during Tsarist times. The Russian police officer had a problem building a case because the peasant's reasoning was contextual and situational while his own reasoning was text-based and decontextualized (like that of the subjects of Luria's experiments),

'But you could have used some lead for a sinker, a piece of shot . . . or a nail . . .'

'You don't find lead on the railway, you got to buy it [the peasant was too poor to buy a sinker], and a nail's no good. You won't find anything better than a nut . . . It's heavy, and it's got a hole through it.'

'Stop pretending you're daft, as though you were born yesterday or fell off the moon! Don't you understand, you blockhead, what unscrewing these nuts leads to? If the watchman hadn't been keeping a look-out, a train could have been derailed, people could have been killed! You would have killed people!'

'Lord forbid, your honor! What would I want to kill people for? Do you take us for heathens or some kind of robbers? Glory be, sir, in all our born days we've never so much as thought of doing such things, let alone killed anyone . . . Holy Mother of Heaven save us, have mercy on us . . . What a thing to say!'

'Why do you think train crashes happen, then? Unscrew two or three of these nuts, and you've got a crash!'

Denis sniggers, and peers at the magistrate skeptically.

'Hah! All these years our village's been unscrewing these nuts and, the Lord's preserved us, and here you go talking about crashes—me killing people . . . Now if I'd taken a rail out, say, or put a log across that there track, then I grant you that'd brought the train off, but a little nut? Hah!'

'But don't you understand, it's the nuts and bolts that hold the rails to the sleepers!'

'We do understand . . . We don't screw them all off . . . we leave some . . . We're not stupid—we know what we're doing . . .' (Chekhov et al. 1994: 45–49)

It is difficult to make 'good citizens' of a totalitarian regime out of print-illiterate people like this Denis or the elder Uzbek from Luria's experi-

ment because it is very difficult (but not impossible) to engage them in participating in an ideological pseudo-reality, the basis of ideological oppression. Print illiterate people are 'mentally unfit', they are 'too stupid' for sophisticated and dynamic ideological oppression because their thinking is too grounded in real life (they are 'out of politics' as Lenin claimed). Their world of the spoken word resists the construction of an ideological text-based self-contained pseudo-reality. Using only the context of words themselves for meaning making is the semiotic basis for decontextualization. As Ong explains,

Spoken utterance is addressed by a real, living person to another real, living person or real, living persons, at a specific time in a real setting which includes always much more than mere words. Spoken words are always modifications of a total situation which is more than verbal. They never occur alone, in a context simply of words. (Ong 1982, p. 101)

Learning how to engage in decontextualized thinking without print literacy is probably possible but difficult. The totalitarian regime considered such individuals backwards and sent them to school to learn print literacy and decontextualization.

In conclusion, we want to remark that print literacy has Janus' double face (Kaestle 1985) and although it greatly contributed to ideological oppression under totalitarian regimes, it also contributed to dissident movements (Eklof 1987). An emergent literary practice like 'samizdat' (literally 'self-publishing' in Russian) that involved writing, copying, and spreading officially forbidden literature (Bukovsky 1979) is one example of the liberating functions of literacy under a totalitarian regime.

##### 5. Conclusion: Traditional mainstream schooling

Teaching children and adults how to read and write can facilitate not only liberation but also oppression. Teaching print literacy can contribute to oppression of learners as well as enable them to become oppressors themselves. In traditional mainstream schools in western or westernized settings, as in colonial regimes, print literacy can oppress students by teaching them (especially minority and economically disadvantaged students) alienated printed texts that are irrelevant and useless for them; by devaluing and not using students' local funds of knowledge; and by not promoting or allowing the use of print literacy in the students' autonomous practices (Bunyi 2001; Freedom Writers and Gruwell 1999; Hall 1998; Luke 1999; Rueda and Dembo 1995; Rueda and Moll 1994;

Thompson 1998; Ungerleider 1985). As it does in totalitarian regimes, print literacy can promote the ideological oppression of students by teaching them propaganda in tacit and explicit forms (Gee 1996; Loewen 1996). It is interesting that in comparing mainstream institutions of the democratic capitalist United States and the Communist Soviet Union, it is possible to conclude that schools are the most nearly similar institutions in the two settings. Banks, hospitals, police, and government—all were very different in the USA and the USSR—but not mainstream schools. We agree with Gee (Gee et al. 1996) and suspect that American mainstream schooling has many totalitarian oppressive functions. Finally, print literacy in schools can facilitate bureaucratic oppression by teaching decontextualized and 'literal' texts (Kiziltan et al. 1990; Linell 1992; Minick 1993). This problem is further compounded by a focus on the mechanics of 'Standard English' as opposed to the writing styles and word choices favored by African-American, Latino, or other minority students (Gee 1996; Stuckey 1991). Gee points out the contradictions surrounding the elusive character of 'school-based literacy practices' for so many students. In addition, and most significantly, within these very practices are 'carr[ied] . . . mainstream, middle-class values of quiescence and placidity, values that will ensure no real demands for significant social change, nor any serious questions about the power and status of the aging elites, such as embarrassing historical questions about how they obtained that power and status' (Gee 1996: 25).

Not only can print literacy oppress students but it can prepare some students to become oppressors in the future. Studying American traditional schooling, several scholars have concluded that traditional schooling functioned, in part, to reproduce the middle class through credentialism and through teaching them how to participate in bureaucratic/managerial (print-based) relations (Eckert 1989; Labaree 1997; Varenne and McDermott 1998). Learning how to play the bureaucratic and competitive games of school success not only socializes well-to-do students to effectively participate in the bureaucratic managerial system, but also teaches them how to deploy and command this system—how to develop, negotiate, and enforce inscribing categories, text-based rules, and procedures.

If we, as educators, want to promote the liberating functions of print literacy, we need to focus on a sociocultural analysis of pedagogical and institutional regimes that schools establish for their participants (Stuckey 1991). This sociocultural analysis should examine relations, constraints, goals, and values of school participants as they manifest themselves in activities, practices, and discourses and exploration of how schools might foster the dialogic possibilities of print.

## Notes

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1. For the purpose of this article, we do not distinguish print literacy and written literacy (for a discussion of differences between print and written literacy, see Kaestle 1985).
  2. In this section, we are skipping the question of how colonial regimes oppress (indigenous) people because this issue has been well discussed in the literature (see, for example, Chandra 1999).
  3. We define oppression here as a relational and not an essential phenomenon. Of course, many indigenous people were oppressors themselves in relations to other indigenous people both before and after colonization (Rockwell 2001).
  4. We are thankful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing at this limitation in our analysis.
  5. While looking for Spanish academic sources on national literacy campaigns during Franco's regime, we faced with a peculiar phenomenon. Although statistics showing tremendous growth have been reported (Viñao 1990), we found that Spanish scholars hesitate to credit Franco's regime for spreading literacy in Spain. Although we agree with them that the official Fascist statistics was probably unreliable and self-serving, it is impossible to deny the progress Fascist Spain achieved in spreading print literacy as became especially evident in the high level of print literacy of the Spanish population after the fall of Fascism in Spain at the end of the 1970s. We suspect that many contemporary Spanish scholars of literacy cannot see how print literacy contributed to Spanish fascism and ideological oppression (Delgado 1992). The same seems to be true for contemporary Italian literacy; studies on Fascist Italy are reluctant to credit the Fascist regime of Mussolini and its literacy campaigns for the spread of print literacy in Italy.
  6. Academia often enthusiastically greeted literacy campaigns in Communist countries as democratic and anti-oppressive achievements (consider the initial reaction to such programs in the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, and Nicaragua) and as a valuably contrasting alternatives to oppressive education in capitalist and authoritarian regimes (Arnové 1980; Kozol 1978; Miller 1985; Scribner 1982). Serious scholarship is typically impossible in totalitarian countries where research is also viewed as an extension of propaganda and ideology. Only recently has serious and critical scholarship become available about Soviet and Chinese literacy campaigns (Cleverley 1991; Eklof 1987; Hayford 1987; Kenez 1982; Shadrnikov and Pakhomov 1999). Similar studies of literacy campaigns in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Vietnam are still unavailable. Such studies may undermine or support our hypothesis about totalitarian literacy.

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## The marketization of discourse about education in UK general election manifestos

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### Abstract

*After 1945, a broad 'post-war consensus' developed in the West. There was general agreement that the state had an important role to play in such areas as macroeconomic management, environmental protection, and social provision for health, education, and welfare. But since the late 1970s, as part of the neo-liberal project to extend the market into every aspect of social life, there has been a backlash against 'inefficient', 'bureaucratic', 'unwieldy', and 'inflexible' state provision. In this article, I examine the discursive dimension of one facet of the 'new capitalism': the marketization of education in the UK. Using frameworks derived from critical discourse analysis, I analyze texts from three election manifestos: the Labour and Conservative manifestos from the 1987 election (a turning point in UK education policy), and the Labour 1997 manifesto. I show how aspects of textual organization, such as patterns of transitivity, the representation of social actors, semantic prosody, and coherence, have a central role to play in the construction of 'comprehensive' and 'market' conceptualizations of the domain.*

*Keywords:* critical discourse analysis; education; election manifestos; marketization; political discourse; social actors; transitivity.

### 1. Introduction

The critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough defines the process of 'marketization' as the reorganization and reconceptualization of 'social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale ... in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption' (Fairclough 1992: 207). Marketization is an important element in a set of changes in contemporary capitalism which are variously identified as 'globalization', 'post