There has been much discussion in recent years about the digital divide. Considerations of it in instructional technology have been ubiquitous in government offices, corporate boardrooms, educational institutions, and community-based organizations, and have focused on both policy and social impact issues regarding how to bridge this gap (Kvasny & Keil, 2006; Sassi, 2005). Indeed, the digital divide has been one of the most discussed topics in the field of educational and instructional technology and in academia in the last decade, both in book-length discussions (Bolt & Crawford, 2000; Compaine, 2001; Ebo, 1998; Lax, 2001; Walsh, 2000; Warschauer, 2003) and in scholarly articles (Bucy, 2000; Grabil, 2003; Gunkel, 2003; Hoffman et al., 2000, Kunango, 2004; Kvasny & Kiel, 2006; Sassi, 2005; Wresch, 1996). Further, a Google search on the subject in December 2007 yielded more than a half million hits, which indicates that it is discussed in more general circles as well.

Some of the discussions of the digital divide focus on how it should be conceptualized, but many more focus on how to bridge or close the divide. There are many published reports based on studies conducted by the United Nations (Press & Dumans, 2006), government offices such as the U.S. Department of Commerce and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2004), and by foundations such as the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2003). Positions in these reports run the gamut from "the divide is closing on its own over time to arguments that say that the divide is getting worse over time" (Hacker & Mason, 2003, p. 99). To some extent, arguments from both sides support what Wresch (1996) claims: that integrated technology in education exacerbates the existing divisions and inequities between historically privileged and oppressed groups that already exist. After analyzing some of NTIA's official statistics and reviewing other research studies, Selwyn, Gorard, and Williams (2001) also note that there has been a polarization between the haves and have-nots that is partially a result of this technology. In addition, they conclude, "it would therefore seem clear that broadly, the same social groups are facing exclusion from both educational opportunities and overall access to technology" (p. 261). It seems obvious that elimination of inequities in access to technology depends on eliminating the existing inequities in education and in access to the world's resources; yet often this wider context is ignored in discussions of the digital divide.

The primary purpose of this paper is not so much to re-conceptualize the digital divide, even though some analysis of it will be provided; rather our purpose here is to examine the implicit assumptions that appear to be the underpinnings to the discourse of "closing" and "bridging" the digital divide. In other words, while we agree that equal distribution of educational digital opportunities is desirable, we are curious why so many policymakers, politicians, CEOs, scholars, and educators suddenly became so concerned about the digital

divide in the late 1990s and in the early years of the new millennium. After all, lack of access to computers and Internet technologies are no different than the many inequities that people from dominated and underrepresented groups have historically experienced in terms of access to education and to the world's resources overall, and there hadn't been the same concern over such inequities. We wonder who is really benefiting from the discourse about the digital divide? As Luyt (2004) observes, there are many divides throughout the world deserving attention, such as "the 'fair working conditions divide' or the 'healthy life divide' between nations and peoples" (¶ 3). Why the *digital* divide? What are the social, economic, and political factors that make this "divide" more of a concern than other divides?

Many authors do, in fact, note that discussions of the digital divide need to be kept in context of a larger consideration of many of the world's divides based on gender, race, class, and nation (Kling, 1998; Kvasny & Keil, 2006; Kvasny, 2006; Luyt, 2004). They indicate that attending to the digital divide has beneficial consequences in that it can raise the cultural capital of those who have access to, and/or learn the skills necessary to navigate aspects of the divide. However, they also note that it has unintended consequences as well, and that there is a difference between the digital divide and digital inequality. As Kvasny (2006) notes, "digital inequality is concerned with equitable access to the *benefits* derived from Internet and computer use. Digital inequality does not only reflect disparities in access to ICT [information and communication technologies]; it also reflects ongoing social inequities in the US" (emphasis added, p. 162). Thus, conceptually, digital inequality recognizes the fact that too often the beneficiaries of the emphasis on "bridging the digital divide" are business and government in that IT "enables firms and governments to push the limits of economic efficiency" (Kvasny & Truex, 2001, p. 403). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004), for example, examines ITs infusion at the macroeconomic level, industry level, and firm level, and also analyzes its beneficial impact on productivity and economic growth at each of these levels. But these benefits have never been addressed clearly for underrepresented, marginalized, and oppressed groups and classes. In fact, the so-called "benefits" for such underrepresented groups are discussed more from the perspective of avoiding detrimental consequences—i.e., avoiding being left behind and out of a job. For example, the Benton Foundation (1998), states that those who do not have access will become more impoverished because institutions—including the government, community organizations, and corporations—are placing resources such as various application forms and tax documents online. In addition, regardless of access to IT, workers around the world face a decline in job security and solidarity because of global competition (Kvasny & Truex, 2001). Interestingly, the detrimental aspect of IT diffusion is more often framed as

"unintended consequences" (Kvasny & Keil, 2006, p. 27). How much are these so-called "unintended consequences" really unintended? Do they harm or do they benefit, and if so, whom do they benefit and harm the most? Further, we wonder if the rhetoric itself is "unintended" as well, and if this rhetoric serves to privilege the interest of some groups over others? Perhaps it serves to develop mass consensus on social and educational inequalities' innocent inevitability and universal validity. As a result, we will attempt to reconstruct the ideology and rhetoric of the digital divide by centering its economic-political and ideological aspects and its relation to educational inequities. In so doing, we begin first by laying out the theoretical framework of our argument; next, we look at some of the current literature related to the digital divide. Then we will examine technology's historical relations with the hegemonic power structure, and what it suggests for educators.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of our argument in reconstructing the digital divide discourse is grounded in the thinking Antonio Gramsci (1981), particularly in his conceptualization of how ideological hegemony is employed by dominant elites over dominated groups to reproduce the status quo and power structure. According to Gramsci, hegemony is a political power that feeds not only from authority and armed forces (military, police, etc.), but also from intellectual and moral leaders who strongly affect how people think. While authority and armed forces represent the coercive force, intellectual and moral leadership represent the cultural force. Having control over these two forces grants a social group the privilege of being a ruling class. Gramsci's deepest concern is with altering systems of domination in advanced industrial societies. According to Giroux (1981), Gramsci claims that "with the rise of modern science and technology, social control was exercised less through the use of physical forces (army, police, etc.) than through the distribution of an elaborate system of norms and imperatives" (p. 39). As a result, Gramsci is more concerned about intellectuals' role in cultural forces in the process of hegemonic dominance; either they serve the interest of ruling elites and help to maintain ideological hegemony or they counter-serve hegemonic forces by breaking the cycle of dehumanization and oppression, by laying bare the underlying ideological assumptions that affect how people think. In essence then, we perceive the digital divide discourse and its popularization as a product of ideological hegemony. Furthermore, we concern ourselves with educators' roles in this digital divide discourse. This will be made clear in the following discussion; for now we move to a consideration of how the digital divide has been conceptualized in the literature.

Conceptualizations of the Digital Divide

There are numerous conceptualizations of approaches to the digital divide. Gunkel (2003), for example, notes that often conceptualization of the digital divide revolves around three primary issues: the terminology itself, including how it developed as well as what it implies; a binary structure separating those who have access to technology from those who don't; and form, which refers to its ramifications for society. Sassi (2005), on the other hand, notes four major perspectives: technocratic; socio-structural; focused on information structure and exclusion; or focused on capitalism. But these can ultimately be collapsed into three major approaches that we discuss below: the binary approach, the multidimensional approach, and the economist approach.

The Binary Approach

This approach can be considered as the earliest characterization of the divide. It demonstrates a fairly shallow understanding of the digital divide, which is viewed as an issue of physical access to the new computer technology and the Internet. In other words, the term is used to refer to the gap between those who have the opportunity to access and/or use digital technologies and those who do not. The terminology that has been used to refer to this difference includes technology "haves" and "have-nots" or "information rich" and "information poor. Gunkel (2003) states that even though this binary approach to the digital divide has been measured to determine socio-technological differences, it inevitably risks oversimplifying the situation and overlooks the important variations that exist in context. The binary approach has been criticized in a very similar tone by many other scholars, such as Blau (2002), Gorski (2003), Gunkel (2003), and Solomon (2002), because the divide, they claim, goes deeper than just having access to the physical hardware and software. Moreover, Warschauer (2003) claims that the divide should not be perceived as a binary division, but rather "a continuum based on different degrees of access to information technology" (¶ 1).

The Multidimensional Approach

In contrast to the binary approach, the multidimensional approach perceives the digital divide in relation to other social, economic, and psychological variables. Since no one can deny the importance of having access to physical availability of technological equipment, software, and network connections, those in this group build their arguments on the basis of the binary approach's narrow, simplistic framing of the digital divide. The multidimensional approach argues that other determinants (i.e., income, race, ethnicity, education, and required skills) create and support limited access to resources in general that

are barriers to technology. The digital divide is thus a further result of barriers that exist and that need to be dealt with. For example, Kvasny and Keil (2006) argue that focusing exclusively on physical access to the new technology and Internet signifies a rather narrow framing of the problem. They claim that much of the research on the digital divide has been survey-oriented. They also state that even though the survey method can shed light on the extent of IT adaptation and diffusion, it is not appropriate to explain the reasons why the digital divide continues to persist even when citizens are provided with free access to the technology. In the same vein, Kvasny (2006) asserts that we cannot adequately understand the digital divide if we ignore the broader social context.

While Kvasny and Keil (2006) and Kvasny (2006) pay attention to other determinants such as social stratification and human capital, others see the digital divide from a different angle. Kling (1998), for example, perceives the issue as beyond one of accessibility. He distinguishes the divide as not just an issue of access to the equipment, but access to "suitable" (¶ 3) equipment including computer and connection speed, appropriate software, etc. In addition, he emphasizes psychological aspects of the divide, which he refers to as "know-how" (¶ 4)—a mix of knowledge and technical skills required to employ and manipulate the resources effectively. Similarly, Hawkins and Obliger (2006) claim that set of skills and knowledge needed for to use the technology effectively is another crucial factor in the digital divide. Along the same lines, Besser (2001) asserts another divide between those who have ability and knowledge to create and distribute the information or the content and those who can only be consumers. Thus, most recently the term "digital divide" is used beyond the concept of access to refer to the discrepancies between those who are equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge to manipulate the resources and those who are not (Benton Foundation, 2007; DiMaggio et al., 2004; Patterson & Wilson 2000). As we can see, the diffusion of IT not only adds another layer on top of existing inequalities, it also creates inequities in itself that we would refer to as "digital inequities," which some other authors call a second digital divide (i.e., Attewell, 2001). Beyond the cost of access, other digital inequities that affect the adoption of the new technology are language and literacy, comfort, and content (Community Technology Center, n.d.).

We believe that Kvasny (2006) has developed the most comprehensive framework for examination of the digital divide. She grounds her discussion in Bourdieu's theory of cultural and social reproduction to go beyond common conceptualizations of the digital divide that too narrowly focus on technological access and interface issues. This framework lays out the greatest number of possible socio-economic factors that affect the divide. For example, Kvasny emphasizes the importance of cultural capital since the Internet tends to reflect the culture and interests of the middle class or moneyed class. Her framework also

does not fall into a binary mode, even though it recognizes the importance of having access to the software and hardware. Finally, Kvasny contends that the embedded historical, institutional, economic, cultural, and social conditions are roots for unequal access so that her framework could be applied to broader social contexts. According to Kvasny, the digital divide's framework can only be understood adequately if multiple factors are considered; these factors include technical means, cultural capital, economic capital, social capital, and institutional reform.

The Economist Approach

In addition to the earlier two approaches, the economist approach in general recognizes the existence of the divide but claims that it is a natural consequence of a market-driven economy. Moreover, this approach asserts and predicts that somehow free market forces will naturally close the divide or that the divide will disappear on its own (Compaine, 2001; Samuelson, 2002).

Some others (i.e., Green, 2000; PEW Internet & American Life, 2003) claim that the digital divide just seems to exist because some people have access and opportunity, but they just do not want to use it. As a result, the digital divide does not exist and it is a voluntary divide. While the authors of the Pew report (Pew Internet & American Life, 2003) do not necessarily subscribe totally to this view, they do note it in their analysis of why people might not be Internet users. According to this report one of the significant reasons why people are not online "is lack of desire—they do not want the Internet, do not feel that they need it, and do not feel that it holds anything of interest or value for them. They believe they are not missing out on anything by not being online" (¶ 1). Moreover, Green (2000), a conservative African American, claims,

> There really is no digital divide. This new victim syndrome was concocted to continue coddling the poor and minorities by saying they have been slighted and deprived of equal opportunity. It is nothing more than a scam to open up another door for federal intrusion and expansion. The goal is to foster guilt, and it milks us all to pay for it. (¶ 4)

Some others even perceive the digital divide from a completely different perspective and treat it as a divider to separate technology advocates from technology critics. For example, Moore (1995) uses the digital divide to claim that the technology critics are devaluing the information technology and its potential to solve the world's problems. In other words, he uses the term, digital divide, to divide technology enthusiasts from technology critics.

The Digital Divide in Education

The argument of the digital divide in education includes similar approaches. While some focus on just physical access to the new technology, others focus on various degrees of technology use in different schools based on their financial resources (Garland & Wotton, 2001; Means, 2001; Nevens, 2001). It should not be surprising to find out that while rich suburban schools have installed the fastest wireless computers with all necessary multimedia components and have well-trained teachers to use the new technologies more effectively in the classroom, poorer urban and rural schools are struggling with out-of-date computers and insufficient and unreliable Internet access. "It's not new news that low-income, inner-city and rural kids don't have equal access to computers. They also typically don't have equal access to the educational, social, or economic resources necessary for success in U.S. society" (Arafeh, Regan, & Saltman 2000, ¶ 4). Thus, we would argue that the digital divide is just a small portion of educational inequities in American society, and we as educators should focus more on the "deeply entrenched and historically cycled inequities" (Gorski, 2001, p. 3) in education and their economic and political roots in the larger social order.

Technology, Ideology, and Discourse

Social problems cannot be understood by simply looking at their description, survey-based statistical data, or analysis of their contemporary manifestation. Their historical and social roots should also be examined. Therefore we begin this section by analyzing the issues associated with digital technology's organic relations to the dominant economic system and its ideology.

*Technology and Clas*s

Our understanding of technology falls into the traditional historical materialist perspective. According to this perspective, at its most basic level, technology is an infrastructural mode of production determining superstructural social relations. The infrastructure is a set of products of human beings interacting with nature. Infrastructure consists of the conditions of production (natural resources, climate, and situations, etc.); the means of production (instruments, machinery, knowledge, and skills); and the relations for production (economic structure of society, e.g., as in a capitalist system). The superstructure, on the other hand, is, in the most simplistic definition, a reflection of the infrastructure such as social institutions including the state, law, family, and educational systems.

Historically there has always been a set of specific economic and social conditions that have driven any technological development. Since the industrial revolution, the motives of those advocating the use of technological inventions appear to have been to increase the efficiency of material production to maximize the surplus value. In a capitalist system the capital and surplus value are more often given more weight than people. Following this logic, the new computer and communication technologies as parts of the cultural infrastructure are more likely to serve the interests of the dominant class, specifically the reproduction of the existing societal structure and the dominant ideological framework. As Moss (2002) has noted, "The most striking thing about the divide as it exists in the United States is that the constraints that are imposed on disadvantaged individuals mirror already existing inequalities" (p. 161). In other words, the digital divide has revealed one more time that technology benefits those who invent, own, and control it (Noble, 1983). Therefore, it is necessary to examine technological innovations in relation to class structure.

Even though class as a concept is very complicated and vexing, it is more problematic in the United States because social class is not a census or legal category, and Americans, no matter their household income, like to identify as middle-class. Domhoff (1983) states that "class and power are terms that make Americans a little uneasy, and concepts such as ruling class and power elite immediately put people on guard" (p. 1). Domhoff also notes that the notion of an economic or political domination of a specific group or class contradicts the founding principles of the country. Moreover, he asserts that Americans' common assumptions and beliefs are based upon a pluralistic view of power. This view is a set of assumptions that do not accept existence of the ruling class or power elite. One of the assumptions is that certain individuals appear to be more influential than others due to having a higher socio economical status than the others. According to this belief, constitutionally anybody can have this kind of status and, therefore, existence of these individuals does not mean that they constitute an elite social group or class. Pluralist Dahl (1961) claims that there is not a unified elite in democracy because power diffusion is embedded within a democracy. Pluralists basically assert that elites do not have any intention to control and manipulate non-elites. Reality, however, indicates otherwise. In reality, wealth-based social classes exist in the United States (Domhoff, 1983), and classes are more related to the means of production than cultural factors. Moreover, these classes or groups do work to control and manipulate the non-elites. Dominant class existence, to some degree, is based upon the ability of maintaining its own domination. This complexity and confusion could be from the result of a political notion that perceives the class notion heavily from Weberian theory of stratification, which emphasizes socio-cultural factors as main determinants. Although Marx's class perspective is criticized for neglecting socio-cultural

factors, such as race and gender, in class relations, and for grouping people strictly with a specific relation to the means of production, Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994) disagree with this criticism by stating:

> Class is never just a stagnant category based on occupational position, income, or wealth as sociologists have typically defined it. Class assumes an active relationship to a labor process. …Marx's great achievement in relation to class is that it is a project constituted by the labor process but never independent of social and cultural relations. (p. 273)

Therefore, considering the strong correlation between social problems and their specific socio-economic and political context, it is important to consider both economic and cultural components when we approach social problems such as inequities and the digital divide. For example, without considering class issues and power relations, any approach to the digital divide will likely lead to an inadequate conclusion. Actually, believing that providing computers to poor schools would be adequate to increase children's academic achievement is a result of a lack of consciousness of class factors. As Kennard (2000) states, because of the social class they belong to, children (and adults) do not have equal access to opportunities and resources. In other words, if inequities begin even before the school gate, there is nothing a computer in and of itself can do to benefit the students. Similarly, in their adult lives such students will be less likely to see the great benefits of being connected to the Internet. Because of globalization, they will more than likely deal with the anxiety of being downsized. As a result, we suggest that the digital divide debate that educators have been pulled into has never been intended to eliminate the divide; in fact it has been about only closing or bridging the divide (note that "closing" and "bridging" semantically do not connote eliminating the divide). As Luyt (2004), and Sassi (2005) imply, those with an understanding of how capitalism works would suggest that the digital divide argument is likely more about legitimization of capitalist ideology and its "latest form of reorganization" (Mayo, 1999, p. 1)—globalization, which serves to maintain the structure of domination. As a result, the elimination of the digital divide is even out of question. Elimination of the digital divide would be antagonistic to the existing structure, since it requires the elimination of the gap between social classes. This would be the end of the soul of free trade, which is central to a capitalist ideology.

Given this context, it is incumbent on us as educators to examine and re-examine our role in the process of reproduction of the status quo, and in regenerating "old inequities in a new cyber-form" (Gorski, 2001, ¶ 8). We propose that by examining the ideology and discourse that surround this discussion, we can come to a greater understanding of the forces in place that

maintain the system, and thus will be more likely able to intervene to change them.

Ideology and Discourse

There are various definitions of ideology. The most ample definition, however, has been made by Hall (1986) who states that ideology is "the mental framework—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense or define, figure out and render intelligibly the way society works" (p. 28). From a Marxist perspective, ideology is a form of superstructure driven by economic forces and relations of production and it basically serves to reproduce the status quo. Therefore, it appears that ideology and economic structure are inseparable and interrelated. This relationship is dynamic and dialectical; thus, most of the time, social change is fueled and driven by this dynamic relation. This includes how the system modifies itself so that it continues to maintain its hegemony. When we look at the evolution of capitalism, for example, we will see how it evolves from one formation to another in order to survive its internal and external contradictions. The shift from early capitalism to managerial capitalism and now from managerial capitalism to global network capitalism serves as an example. Louw (2001) asserts that "capitalism appears to possess a great capacity for mutation, which means it will probably mutate again, if and when global network capitalism confronts a 'falling rate of profit' and/or other form of crises" (p. 126). And when capitalism begins to change its manifestations, it reinvents itself by "modifying [its] discourses and practices and even changing the 'staffing' of [its] hegemonic alliances" (Louw, 2001, p. 126). Therefore, globalism as "the latest form of capitalist reorganization" (Mayo, 1999, p. 1) and its vital apparatus, computer and Internet technologies, can be explained and understood from this perspective.

As Gramsci (1972) notes, in order to remain and successfully complete any necessary transformation, capitalism has to build and maintain its hegemony and influence on dominated groups by creating cultural and political consensus through formal and informal organizations and institutions such as school, media, and family. These institutions and organizations are where hegemony is exercised by allied classes and social groups for the benefits of the ruling class.

One of the most important ways of maintaining hegemony is through meaning construction. Even though meaning construction draws on many avenues, scientific research and language manipulation are most often used in constructing knowledge in particular ways. Clearly, knowledge construction and resource distribution have not been equal among people and groups. Deshler and Grudens-Schuck (2000) provide a compelling discussion of how knowledge construction systematically benefits some people while excluding others,

including the ways in which research interests are funded by grants and foundations. In the same vein, as Hacker and Mason (2003, p. 99) argue, "Today researchers are most likely to gain grants from organizations that share their orientations to their topics of research." Using Bourdieu's point of view, Jenkins (1992) claims that domination cannot be achieved without manipulation of symbolic and cultural resources, and without the complicity of dominated groups. The encoded language's successful utilization creates the dominant discourse. Dominant discourse's ultimate goal is to establish a systemic worldview as universally valid as well as inclusive. In other words, by utilizing meaning and symbol manipulation, hegemony legitimizes dominant groups' interests, which can serve to structure people's daily experience.

When we look at the discourse about computer and Internet technology, we see how the dominant discourse has been employed to create an army of technology. We observe that the success of this discourse demonstrates three chronological stages: in the earliest stage, unrealistic predictions and phony hopes were deployed and disseminated by using all available channels. For example, government authorities, CEOs, and well-known scholars constantly and consistently dispersed positive aspects of computer and Internet technologies (see Kvasny & Truex, 2001 for a detailed explanation). These technologies were presented as if they were a universal remedy for all societal, environmental, and governmental problems such as educational inequities, illiteracy, racism, poverty, and discrimination. In 1995, the former U.S. vice president, Al Gore presented the Internet as if it were a panacea. He claimed that with the network connection "we will derive robust and sustainable economic progress, strong [participatory] democracies, better solutions to global and local environmental challenges, improved health care, and—ultimately—a greater sense of shared stewardship of our small planet" (Gore, 1995, p. 4).

In the second stage, amidst hopes from the first stage, threat and fear were added to the discourse. Travers and Decker's (1999) description of the process is a good illustration of this stage:

> We are told that North American economies are becoming less competitive internationally. Declining trade advantages are supposedly behind the deficit and the accompanying cuts in social spending. The "good life" is threatened. The only way to revive it is through technological advances. Rising unemployment is blamed on a lack of job related training, and computer skills are portrayed as the means by which individuals can participate in the technological revolution. For this economic revival, we are told we must re-tool our educational institutions to produce a highly skilled workforce. (¶ 5)

The digital divide and the divide's widening at home and in schools were almost framed as the most important problem, both on a national and international level.

In addition, new campaigns, grant and financial aid programs, governmental policies, and administrative pressures were a part of this stage. Installing the technological infrastructure was the objective, because "once the infrastructure was in place, educational institutions were enlisted to provide the information technology literacy and training that would enable the average citizen to use the information superhighway.…Thus the government established a unified force for maintaining and legitimizing an agenda for technology literacy and universal access which, in turn, sustains a private sector bent on creating and extending the world market for U.S. technologies " (Kvasny & Truex, 2001, p. 406).

In the current third stage, "rhetoric about the digital divide has shifted to talk of digital opportunity, new markets and digital dividends" (Kvasny & Truex, 2001, p. 416). "Closing" and "bridging" the digital divide hype seems to be slowing down and in the near future will more likely be fading away, like other equal (!) opportunities that dominated groups have not had a chance to access yet. As Kvasny & Truex (2001) predicted, infrastructure is almost in place now. Digital technologies have already enabled corporations to extend their market to the international arena. In the national arena, on the other hand, these technologies have started reproducing existing social structure.

Hegemony and Us

Henry Giroux (2003) makes a compelling argument for how the process of hegemony affects teachers. He notes,

> Teachers are under siege all over the world like they never have been in the past, and schools are assaulted relentlessly by the powerful forces of neo-liberalism, which want to turn them into sources of profit. What is good for Disney and Microsoft is now the protocol for how global capitalism defines schooling, learning, and the goals of education, especially as it is imposed through the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank abroad, and corporate power at home. (p. 7)

Based on this argument, it appears that part of the purpose of digital technology is to use it as a source of profit. Thus, it doesn't appear that the digital divide discourse is about "closing," bridging, or even eliminating the divide so that dominated groups have access to information, knowledge, and services. If that were really the case, the first concern would have been good housing, adequate nutrition, safer job environments, and equal access to educational opportunities for dominated and underrepresented groups, without regarding class, race, or gender. Access to technology cannot cure historically embedded social ills such as racism, classism, injustice, inequality, and discrimination. Following Giroux's

line of reasoning, it appears that the digital divide discourse supports corporate hegemony.

The digital divide discourse has been employed and successfully utilized in such a way that an intellectual army has been created to serve to maintain dominant hegemony and its new form. Consciously or unconsciously, by participating in a discourse that emphasizes "closing" and "bridging", we educators are neglecting other social inequities and have served to maintain the hegemonic dominance. We have often consented to and reinforced the practice of bringing a computer in front of an oppressed, discriminated against, subordinated, undernourished student. According to Gramsci (1972), hegemony takes various forms and it is usually hidden in the context. Hegemony operates behind our innocent-caring-loving teacher face if we unwittingly engage in its oppressive discourse and tactics. In other words, hegemony "works best when it operates at a less than conscious level—that is, when our socialization has been so thorough that we do not identify our positions as ideology but rather, see them as the articulation of 'truth'" (Holtzman, 2000, p. 34). Therefore, hegemony not only functions through visible forms such as textbooks, media, and web pages, but also in invisible forms that occur spontaneously in our daily experience and that do not need any visual representation or language (discourse) to dominate.

Any societal structure is a product of an ongoing struggle between dominant groups' interests and dominated groups. Since dominant groups or classes have all those powerful apparatuses and ability to successfully utilize all necessary means, what is left for those who struggle against the hegemony to be effective in breaking its chain of dehumanization? Gramsci finds consciousness to be a crucial factor in the struggle of changing the nature of a hegemonic system. The power of consciousness can be a catalyst for liberation. Consciousness can only be gained, however, from active examination of unequal power structures upon which hegemony feeds.

Conclusion

If we frankly care about closing the digital divide and creating a chance for dominated groups to find their voices and be able to participate equitably in society, we need to work for liberation by creating a ground for change. Thus, in order to create a more inclusive education system and society, we have to understand what creates the unequal power structure, what constitutes knowledge, and most importantly what our own role is in the process of reproduction and maintenance of this hegemonic structure.

Because hegemony and indoctrination occur everywhere, we have to carry our educational objectives beyond the classroom walls. As educators, we constantly have to be in a cycle of reexamination of our assumptions and all forms of knowledge including those that are visual (TV, cinema), aural (radio), textual

(book and Internet pages) that we receive from sources that serve to reproduce the hegemonic system. In other words, we should not be passive receivers of distorted knowledge and should not be blind followers of hegemonic authority. Any information we receive and any (educational) tools we are given have to be filtered through our critical consciousness and discussed based on whose interest they were intended to serve.

One way is to lay bare the assumptions that underlie the discourse on the digital divide in our process of demanding elimination of social inequities, which lie behind most social ills. Because it is easy to be co-opted by the discourse itself, we need to involve our colleagues in helping us to continually examine underlying assumptions of arguments, including the ones that we adhere to ourselves. Indeed, working to eliminate social inequities propagated through hegemony and the rhetoric of the day is a daunting task, one we cannot take on alone, but one that we need to prioritize before applying digital Band-Aids to more complex problems. Without sincere attempts at elimination of historical inequities, uncritically digitizing schools only serves the interest of the dominant culture and continues to perpetuate the status quo. While we need to be aware of the digital divide discourse, and its embedded ideology, we need not participate in its hysteria. In analyzing current conditions, Giroux (2003) states that "within the prevailing discourse of neo-liberalism that has taken hold of the public imagination, there is no vocabulary for political or social transformation, no collective vision, no social agency to challenge the privatization and commercialization of schooling" (p. 8). Therefore, we need to attend to context, ideology, and discourse within this oppressive structure, and create a counter-discourse that works for equity while simultaneously unveiling some of the assumptions of the dominant discourse. As Luyt (2004) observes, globalism is rearranging the social order according to the global market's needs. As a result, by uncritically participating in the mainstream discourse we will just reinforce the dominant hegemony. We need not to forget, as Bourdieu (1998, p. 8) claims, that "there is no genuine democracy without genuine opposing critical powers." We need to play a role in this rearrangement process by using all available means to create more possibility for more humanized, egalitarian, and democratic structures. This discussion is one attempt to participate in such rearrangement.

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