

Corporate Colonization of the Life World

If the corporation is not to defeat democracy, then democracy must defeat the corporation—which is to say that the curbing of monopoly and the transformation of corporatism is a political, not an economic, task. Democracy proclaims the priority of the political over the economic; the modern corporation rebuts that claim by its very existence. [L]iberal democracy is too vulnerable—its citizens too passive and its ideas of freedom and individualism too illusory—to recognize, let alone do battle with, the mammoth modern corporation that has assumed the identity and ideology of the traditional family firm.
(Benjamin Barber 1984, 257)

Barber is one of the more recent of numerous authors over the past one hundred years who have been concerned with the growth of organizational bureaucracies and corporate power. From the beginning of the industrial revolution and accompanying bureaucratic growth, social scientists have shared with workers, elected representatives, and the general public various concerns with the transformation of work, power relations, and democracy. Many descriptions have been exaggerated and most of the extreme predictions have not come to fruition, yet the social transformations, while more innocent and quiet, have been great.

As we look back on these writings, we have to be as interested in the effects of these writings on decisions that were made

and what has actually come to pass as we are with their predictive accuracy. Images from these writings have directed attention to aspects of our world that were overlooked in their naturalness and helped produce knowledge that could not have been produced in their absence. Our future is not just to be predicted, it is also to be produced. What is and what ought to be are carefully intertwined in every observation and produced in every decision. Our images and conceptions can lead us as well as mislead us; they can lead and enable us to see, or they can substitute for being in touch with the world. The fear that comes with the fallibility of our conceptions should lead us to be not more cautious but more bold. The lesson of our age is that there is no instant truth, no instant rationality, no instant morality, no *a priori* certainty (R. Bernstein 1984). Ironically, the new Western package is the old-fashioned kind. Indeed truth, rationality, morality, and certainty are to be worked out through conflicting expressions by real people in real communication communities growing and passing with those same communities (Apel 1972). Fallibility is understood again as the opening for discussion rather than as the reason for reserve and silence. As Charles Sanders Peirce was fond of saying, what is one to do with a great idea but to run with it, to follow it to its end. Others will always pull us back. I propose at the outset a new debate regarding the nature of the corporate workplace and democracy, a debate fostered more by hope of a better future than by condemnation of the present or fear of an impending crisis. Hopefully, the absence of crisis potential and the lack of promise for quick answers will leave a space for discussion rather than subtract from the critical nature of the discussion.

Corporations and Democracy: The Feudal Analogue

A variety of writers have identified a number of concerns for the nation-state and democracy itself with the rapid development of the significance of major national and transnational corporations. The most extreme image they have produced is that of a new age in world development. The analogy central to this image is that of a new feudalism (Mirow and Maurer 1982; Schiller 1989; Williams 1983). The extreme version of the image is something like this:

The transnational organizations are structured as a new feudal system with a handful of lords who are constantly at war.

The battles are civil and courtly owing to kinship ties through cross-directorates, international cartels, and common social and educational circles. The wars transpire as takeovers and mergers, since it is the control of information and workers, rather than land, that is contested. The boundaries of the lords' corporations are best represented by lines of authority and constraints on information flow. Employee obedience to those in power supersedes any private romantic loyalty to church, family, community, or nation-state. The employee is first a resource, never a citizen. While the ongoing wars are psychologically costly to this mass of corporate workers, the largely benevolent lord offers support in terms of retraining and relocation payments, through paid physical and mental health plans, through maintaining a pleasant work environment with integrated cultural practices and values, and through the openness of the system so that anyone might him- or herself become a lord (at least hypothetically). Although they are often unpleasant and disruptive, the wars make grand media tales of warriors and intrigue and clearly appear far less costly than the old tension and property wars of the nation-state system, which had become harmful to regularized commerce.

The nation-states retain importance by maintaining a forum for resolution of boundary conflicts and by promoting stable work environments by legislating fair practices and regulation. Further, the state assures stable market conditions and provides a well-trained labor force. Through participation in elections, people feel secure and protected and feel that state policing action is legitimate. Occasionally the national state bureaucracy interferes with corporate action by restricting data flow or protecting less advantaged segments of society (often those hurt in corporate wars), but generally it provides the necessary regulation for corporate development and successful commerce. State power is constantly limited by the fear of big government and the threat of centralized state control of thought and information. The corporate form delivered the consumer goods, and the pro-growth attitudes sustained the ever higher desire for consumption.

It is small wonder that life is generally so integrated and harmonious. Children are born in corporate hospitals environmentally structured with corporate values of rationality and routine, go to corporate sites with their parents to participate in corporate-run daycare, and from there go to schools where they primarily learn positive work-related skills and attitudes. In

addition, most transnationals own their own publishing houses, magazines, newspapers, movie studios, radio stations, and television networks, which provide the bulk of the information, news, and entertainment in each society in the world.

Of course, this is an extreme version of the contemporary situation. But the elements of truth are responsible for the bodily felt urge to refute the account, to "yes, but" it, or to assure ourselves that things are okay. Without debating the accuracy of this view or making value judgments about the goodness or harm of such a potential or real situation, clearly even the most conservative reformation of the account raises questions about the changing nature or even viability of democracy. If we look closer at this story, democracy is left a funny role. Decision making that affects the general public happens in three realms: the legislative body, the administrative/regulatory/policing bureaucracy, and the corporate. Yet only the legislative body has elected representation. The modern corporation is the most protected from direct public control, and it is there that most decisions are made.

If the feudal account has any validity, our old history lessons lead us to wonder about a historical cycle where a new concept of democracy might become the issue. The imagination runs with dumping data in the bay (probably letting viruses eat it), magnets on computer disks, and cries of "no takeover, no profit sharing, no movement of operations without representation." Surely statements of the inalienable right to meaningful work, protection of native cultures, and freedom of community and nation-state allegiance cannot be far behind. Clear differences can be demonstrated between the corporate and feudal world systems, but the corporation looks far more like a feudal system than the small family business, an image that is often used to stop discussion of alternate systems of administration.

The imagination sets a kind of anchor point. The descriptions and issues raised by such images deserve a careful assessment. It is not enough to grant some truth to each point of view on the issues; differences reflect the need for greater specification of "under what circumstances" or examination of the warrants for claims made. Most of this volume will develop conceptions that enable a meaningful account and discussion of corporations and democracy in the modern context; this requires a reformed discussion of what politics and democracy are all about and the nature and effects of the emergence of the modern corporate form. In doing so, it raises questions about

the processes of communication in a democracy and internal to corporations. In the end, developmental processes are explored in light of their contribution to the representation of human interests. I will start with a specification of the issues involved.

The Centrality of the Corporate Institution

The extreme image is partially right. In many respects the corporate sector has become the primary institution in modern society, overshadowing the state in controlling and directing of individual lives and influencing collective social development. Workplace values and practices extend into nonwork life through time structuring, educational content, economic distributions, product development, and creation of needs. Modern corporations affect society by both their products and their income distribution but also by the practices internal to them. This is to suggest not a simple or unidirectional effect, but a critical way of pulling together social forces and providing a particular "circuit" of power (Clegg 1989).

Major national and international corporations have frequently, wittingly and unwittingly, replaced religious, familial, educational, and community institutions in the production of meaning, personal identity, values, knowledge, and reasoning. Rather than each sector having competing demands worked out in floating day-to-day decision making, corporate ideology and practices form a relatively harmonious hierarchical integration largely through distorting the expression of competing needs located in other institutions and suppressing the potential conflicts. In such a fixed mechanical integration, translations and calculations in steering media such as power and money replace discussion and compromise as the primary modes of integration. With such institutional domination in place, every other institution subsidizes or pays its dues for the integration given by the corporation structure, and by so doing reduces its own institutional role. The state developed for public good interprets that as the need for order and economic growth. The family that provided values and identity transforms that to emotional support and standard of living. The educational institution that fostered autonomy and critical thought trains for occupational success.

The extent of the modern corporate encroachment into nonwork life and transformation of other institutions might

properly be called a “colonizing” activity—a colonization of the life world (Habermas 1984, 1987). As will become clear, much of this “colonization” is organic rather than merely mechanical and has arisen along the line of extension of dominant existing values and practices. Everyday language has gradually become commercialized, private control of media and places of expression has been extended and centralized, education has become increasingly professionalized and focused on job skills, and women have added to a less expensive and more highly trained work force. In many respects the modern corporation has been the benefactor rather than initiator of such social changes. But the corporate sector has also been active in getting favorable legislation passed to extend corporate power and control. The corporate world’s fear of what was seen as a liberal press and antibusiness sentiment on campuses has contributed to huge expenditures on public relations, greater educational involvement, and the purchase of most mass communication capacities. None of this has been trivial, and significant shifts in institutional relations have resulted.

The Eclipse of the State

Much has been written during the past decade on the complex changing relationships between business organizations and the state largely as a result of the new communication systems and technologies (Braman 1989; Schiller 1986; Wallerstein 1980). Business organizations have become the primary institution in many societies, perhaps even in the United States. Part of this is a result of sheer economic power. The United States is one of a handful of nations with gross national products larger than the gross product of several international corporations. Deeply involved with the growth of the multinationals have been issues of accountability and effects on nations’ economies and public policies. As Morgan (1986) summarized:

Many modern organizations are larger and more powerful than nation-states; but, unlike nation-states, they are often not accountable to anyone but themselves. For example, recent research has suggested that the activities of many multinationals, particularly those operating from the United States, are highly centralized, their foreign subsidiaries being tightly controlled through policies, rules, and regulations set by headquar-

ters. The subsidiaries have to report on a regular basis (often weekly), and their staffs are often allowed very little influence on key decisions affecting the subsidiary. The resources of the multinationals are also usually managed in a way that creates dependency rather than local autonomy (302).

But structure, as well as size and power, is the issue. In the historically "less planned" economies, the state's power is exercised primarily through restriction and crude guidance through taxation and environmental protection, while corporate organizations are empowered to make most decisions as to technological development, utilization of resources, and working relations among people. As will be shown, such a situation is likely to grow, since the state lacks the ability and resources to collect independent data, to engage in large-scale monitoring, and to generate large-scale value consensus, *even if* it desired to create values different from those instituted by corporate organizations (Votaw and Sethi 1973). Clearly, even the "planned" economies as well as the traditional societies of the world gradually had to develop a market orientation as they opened up to international commerce (Evans 1989). The point here is not to present a nostalgic claim for a strong nation-state or national allegiance, any more than it is to make a claim for a return to the primacy of any other institution. We should recognize, however, that the modern corporation is a significant site of public decision making, perhaps more significant than the state. Any conception of politics that restricts political analysis to governance by the state misses the operant politics of modern society. Certainly federal officials have not been unaware of the change. Even *Newsweek* (Clift 1990) recently featured an article entitled "They're Crying in the Capital: Washington Discovers its Global Irrelevance," outlining the sense of loss of state importance (though focusing on the absence of press attention rather than the absence of power). Clearly the sense of relevancy changes with wars and international tensions. But the trend toward an invisible regulatory mechanism and corporate-run public decisions seems clear.

The State Subsidy of Corporations. The growing corporate domination of social decision making is not simply a result of the separation of the public from the private or of a minimalist view of government. In the United States, the federal government actively supports and promotes corporate interests. Or as

Gandy (1982) would most completely argue, the government and press are essentially corporate "subsidiaries." For example, the regulation of bandwidth in radio broadcasting promotes commercial stability and allows competing corporations to fight the economic battle in the FCC rather than in the more costly marketplace (Streeter 1989). The United States executive-branch decisions to support market-regulated, rather than socially regulated, transnational data flows shows a procorporate growth position not shared by most other nations, who may be more vulnerable and use different criteria (Schiller 1989; Gandy 1982). Even state agencies such as social welfare, hospitals, job (re)training centers, and schools perform important procorporation political functions such as disposing with troublesome social problems, defining notions of health and safety, legitimating societal patterns of inequalitarian treatment and domination, and preparing people for future corporate needs. Such "subsidiaries" appear natural, necessary and appropriate. Clearly, at root, the enlightenment transformations left the state as the "*guarantor of society's progress*" (Donzelot 1988, 395). Global competitiveness and increased material goods are seen as state responsibilities fulfilled by the promotion of corporate interests. As Luke (1989) claimed, "Private-sector firms have teamed up with the blessing of public-sector state agencies to regulate the consumption of goods and services of private individuals in the privacy of their own homes as part of a larger public interest of constant economic growth" (98). In this strange logic, the state becomes the most powerful promotor of commercial organizations as the means of fulfilling its public obligation.

Although governmental bureaucracies, like corporate ones, are complex, multifaceted, and often filled with contradictions, the directions seem clear. Corporations support a minimalist government in regard to social planning and social decisions, and a big and active government for the promotion of corporate autonomy and commercially based decision making. Public decisions rest more and more in the economic rather than in the political sphere. The extent of the corporate desire to reduce potential public-criteria competition was clear in a National Commission report on private/public sector interaction in the information area. Schiller (1989) summarized the issue: "Industry in this case challenged the right of the public sector (government, libraries, public universities, etc.) to engage in *any* informational activities the industry regarded as its own province" (80). Be it postal service, retirement funds, road con-

struction, or information, the corporate sector aims at taking as its own any area of service where profit (subsidized or not) can be made and relegating only unprofitable services to the state (which, as a side effect, further demonstrates the inefficiency of publicly run services).

Democracy is threatened as governments give far more governance power and public decision making to the commercial sector. Mirow and Maurer (1982) document the tremendous power and effects multinationals can have on societies around the world. Such organizations pose threats to all democracies. As Morgan (1986) expressed well, contradictions "arise when strong authoritarian powers like the multinationals are allowed to exist in democratic states. For they are in a position to make complete nonsense out of the democratic process, obliging governments to be more responsive to corporate interests than to those of the people who elected them" (304). The concern is not primarily that such activities are often exploitative and that income is shifted to the hands of a few, but that certain groups have the "capacity to control the ends toward which the vast resources of large organizations are directed" (Perrow 1979, 14). Multinationals, however, are not the only powerful force, and it is not just the outcome of major public issues that is at stake. Authoritarian structures eat at democracy in the moment-to-moment processes of everyday life. Such issues will be taken up later.

Corporate Forms of Power. Significantly, the issues involved are deeper and more complex than simply a shift in power from the state to the corporation and a change in the site of public decisions. The type of power being exercised, the manner of its deployment, and the form of decision making are different. Foucault (1980a) argued that the idea of a sovereign, legitimate state passed away some time ago. In some sense, the rise of democracy itself noted a shifting, floating sovereign with power widely dispersed in the society. Certainly the state exists and has its effects, but to a great extent its existence misguides our attention as it conceals the actual procedures of power and the operant sites of decision making. Foucault (1980b, 83ff.) argued that the predominant discussions of power treat it in relation to sovereign rights and that power has a juridico-discursive character. Primarily, power is conceptualized as restrictive of freedom; hence questions about the right or necessity by which a rule made acquire central importance. The rule of law is not only

restrictive but restricted. Its extension must always be justified over and against the power and rights of the individual.

The state as a social force arose in a historical process. The historical development of the state as a public entity centralized and exhausted all institutional legal claims on the individual except for those obligations that the individual freely and contractually enters into as a private person, e.g., working for a corporation and abiding by its rules, or tithing at a church. Such a centralization seemed necessitated by the conflicting demands of numerous dense and entangled prestate powers of conflicting lords and the church. The corporation appears to inherit a similar function at this historical point. This is partly a result of the construction of the postmodern person and emerging conceptual weaknesses in state coordination.

With the schematization of state power in juridical form, the logic of law, taboo, and censorship appears as a normal extension of the conception of power in different aspects of life. "Confronted by a power that is law, the subject who is constituted as subject—who is 'subjected'—is he who obeys. To the formal homogeneity of power in these various instances corresponds the general form of submission in the one who is constrained by it—whether the individual in question is the subject opposite the monarch, the citizen opposite the state, the child opposite the parent, or the disciple opposite the master. A legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other" (Foucault 1980b, 85). Strong state power becomes intolerable because it restricts freedom and does so visibly, the visibility extending to discussions of state control or restrictions on the discussion of control. The breakdown of the oppressive governments in Eastern Europe is the most recent example of that. Such a conception effectively hides or draws attention away from the "devious and supple mechanism of power" that characterizes most of the advanced democracies in the Western world, a power that "is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself" (Foucault 1980b, 86). Control and influence are actually dispersed into norms and standard practices as products of moral, medical, sexual, and psychological regulation—what Foucault called "discipline." This topic will be developed later, but in general, power thus is not dispersed in modern society to citizens who argue and vote and determine the politics of central government, but is spread out through lines of conformity, commonsense observations, and determination of propriety.

"Disciplinary power" poses a new set of questions regarding freedom, representation, and democracy. What can we say, then, of this power that is so masked, a power that normalizes experience rather than provides norms for action, a power that is not up for election, a power that escapes democracy? And given the fragmentation of power sites and the conflict of pulls from competing institutions in the postmodern context, how does the corporation arise as a new center providing the same coordination and relief of tension that the state arose to replace (and suppress) in its time? What is of interest is not so much the powerlessness of the state that presumably represents the will of the people, but the organization of these innumerable sites of disciplinary power through the modern corporation and the complicity of the state in these hidden power relations. The modern corporate power is not monolithic but more like a web that has sites or nodes of decision and control (Clegg 1989). The control knits together practices and decisions of institutions and individuals in everyday life, providing what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) described as a "sutured" totality. Contemporary society is not so much organized around a dominant worldview, a grand narrative, or integrative consensual processes, as tied together through partial stories and numerous mechanisms of coordination. Such effects are at once centralized and dispersed, and analysis must move between centered to decentered concepts of the locus of control. The state is not the only institution increasingly residing in the shadow of corporate organization. The family and community, educational institutions, and the mass media all feel the effects.

The Corporate Structuring of Community and Family

Corporate work practices have transformed the family and community both subjectively and materially. Elias (1973; see Dégot 1987) has provided the most complete description of the development of "industrial civility" whereby values of restraint of personal feelings, good manners, and time structuring move from their development as important aspects of organizational efficiency to being extended into society as a whole (see also Lefebvre 1968). This analysis is in many ways simply a more sensitive and detailed treatment of the historical move Weber (1978; Habermas 1984) examined in the development of the methodical way of life from the Protestant work ethic. Clearly, over time the family and community have lost their primary

institutional functions to a variety of secondary institutions. As Luke (1989) argues, "The family system necessarily has been dismantled from without as professional experts in areas of health care, childbirth, nutrition, education, fashion, morality, elder care, shelter, leisure, and mortuary and funeral services expropriated these functions from the family, where they had been provided naturally as use value, to return them in exchange as commodified goods and services" (108). To be sure, life has been materially enriched by these transformations. The new institutional arrangements, however, enable greater and often unnecessary standardization and most importantly greater control by powerful groups like corporations. Some of this control is direct, but often the family members actively seek guidance. Definitions of health, safety, and lifestyle are strongly influenced by organized societal messages. Although competition and conflict exists among these messages, the degree of competition is less than that possible within individual families in cultural communities. Variety is reduced. Freedom of definition has been neither gained nor lost in these changes, but the site of domination has changed.

Further, the family and community have changed their basic relations to the work experience. Increasingly each is structured around the demands of the workplace. Needs internal to each unit are reordered where possible for the minimal intrusion into worklife. Moving, choice of living community, and timing of children are increasingly tied to work rather than to kinship and community ties (Berger and Berger 1983). Child-rearing practices change with different work arrangements. With industrialization, at least one parent left the home for work, and the child's skill learning became partially separated from that parent. The emergence of two-career families and the creation of daycare extended the separation. Certainly such changes arise at the intersection of corporate and other forces in society. For example, take the following statistics: 85 percent of all U.S. households with children have working mothers (Shreve 1987); many if not most working parents, particularly single ones, express significant amounts of guilt regarding the lack of child-rearing involvement (L. Harris 1987); and since 1973 the average number of hours in the work week has risen from 40 to nearly 50, while weekly leisure hours have decreased from 26 to about 15 (Harris 1987). Whether this has been *initiated* by corporate practices or not, work extends more deeply into the family, people feel the extension, and corporate prac-

tices are intertwined with such changes (see Lambert 1990).

Corporate choices will make a difference in the speed and character of such changes and in how people adapt to them. The question is how much the total community will participate in the choices and how much certain segments of the corporate world will make those choices for the community. How deeply, even if benevolently, will corporate influence extend?

The degree of potential tension between work and family has been widely discussed in the debates over the so-called "mommy track" (Schwartz 1989). Clearly the current realities of business require work commitment and continuity, both of which often conflict with the responsibility for children. Clearly increasing numbers of women (and men) are willing to forego children for their careers. This is an interesting modern shift in site of identity and the nature and structure of "home." The discussion also points up the "invisibility" of the "daddy track" and the often-unquestioned compromises men make—and men's inability, often, to articulate and perform their non-career roles (Hall 1990). Much of the discussion of these issues, as well as discussion of women's corporate experiences in general, has carried a peculiar utopian optimism (Blum and Smith 1988). The attempt has often been to submerge the tension through holding out certainty that women (and men) can have it all. The "have it all" reasoning denies the institutional competition and the check that each institution places on the unrestricted growth of other ones.

For example, in what many would call an "enlightened" move, many corporations have developed daycare centers for working parents. Clearly this has provided many working mothers an equal opportunity for advancement. But such a move has another side. The preference for daycare internal to the corporation presumably supports individual and corporate productivity, but it does so in a way that changes the traditional family-workplace relation. In this way, the conflict between their competing needs is realigned and appears less conflictual (Martin 1990). Flextime, in contrast, recognizes the family as having equal competing needs and forces the corporation to bend to its demands; it does not transform the family into an inconvenience to be minimized. The choice could have been to shift the burden away from the family and individual and require new principles of work organization—a choice that is rarely thought of and lacks a place where it can be voiced. The order of corporate work structure appears to increasingly dominate.

In increasing numbers, children begin life in corporate hospitals with their particular orders and structures, and then go to the workplace with the parents to grow up in the structure and orders of the workday. Further, children usually do not enter the work area and learn the parents' trades and their subjective relations to work; rather, they enter the more anonymous and autonomous daycare world with its own objective orders, structure, and reconstructed value relations. Corporate daycare is unlikely to teach the communal and home values that would have been taught by the grandparent in traditional society or by parents in a more modern one. In fact, if daycare centers were to explicitly teach values, many people would object to this as an invasion of the prerogatives of the private (!) home; yet the "neutral" corporate values of order, particular routines, and orientations to industry are instituted with each moment. Again, the point is not to send the parent home or do away with daycare, but to understand the current situation and open discussion on the society's interest in the structure of work life and its intrusions (see Lambert 1990).

The tendency to move from a family- and community-centered identity to a corporate one passes with little notice. Job mobility connected to geographic mobility creates a type of person who is homeless in a quite specific sort of way. Identity becomes connected to what is stable rather than what is changing, the company or career rather than site community. Quite clearly many people structure the family and home as a place of emotional support and recreation to better enable them to sustain their organizational lives, rather than go to work to sustain their families, wherein one's central identity lies (Kanter 1977). People seem to willingly give their most rested, alert, chemical-free portion of the day to work rather than to family and community, though clearly there are groups that resist. Several social changes have been misunderstood largely because of the neutrality ascribed to corporate life. As women left the home for careers, they presumably gained a measure of autonomy and self-determination. In many respects, the woman was freed from being defined in regard to her husband and his career, but her autonomy is illusory, because she became defined in terms of her corporate role. Rather than the autonomy of identity being achieved, the origin of identity was changed—and this change is often more paternal and constricting of her identity than the institutional definition she was freed from. The point is not to prefer the former, but to dis-

tinguish real movement toward autonomy and self-determination from an illusion of such movement that supports certain interests.

Friendship patterns and community development are of course affected along with the family. The greater the work identity, the less the development of community ties and solidarity. Particularly the mobility fostered in the modern workplace has predictable effects. Many companies discourage employees from becoming tied to their home communities, because such ties make mobility more difficult. Even the nature of houses built and bought is influenced. Homes that are presumed easy to resell are preferred over custom or individualized construction. The first item in the description of the proud new "home" is its resale potential. Such motivation produces homes that are normalized and routinized, with costs to individual expression, lifestyle diversity, and aesthetics. Neighborhoods are more homogenized than stable. Investments made in people are reduced to those at work, since only those are likely to have lasting qualities or value. Noncommitment and replaceability reduce the tension of attachment, expectations, and separation of people and place of residence.

Corporate Education In and Out of the Workplace

Corporate growth is felt not only in the family and community, but also, deeply, in the secondary socialization and learning environments, principally schools and training centers. Classical education was preparation for one's role in the state either as "statesman" or citizen; modern education is primarily a training ground for assuming occupational roles (Geiger 1980). This is not to attribute motives or direct effort to organizations. The shift in function is better attributed to the shared values and legitimacy granted to the corporate institution. But such values and legitimacy are produced and reproduced in micro-practices including communication both within and outside of the corporation and with corporate influence (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976). The extension of such values to the educational process seems necessary and rational when one assumes the very commodity structure and view of knowledge that is fostered by the corporate experience. As the definition of success becomes monetary and singular, the educational system seems more naturally an extension of corporate training. The tremendous amount of material given to school

systems by corporations each year far exceeds what is given, or would ever be permitted to be given, by political or religious groups. But in nearly every case these materials are clearly political, probably religious, and certainly value laden.

As Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argued, all pedagogic activities are potentially “symbolic violence” since they are “the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power” (5). By this they mean that individuals and groups have meanings imposed on them. These meanings have no privilege except that acquired from the apparent legitimacy of their provider, a legitimacy derived primarily from the hidden exercise of power relations. Education can produce and reproduce the schemes of perception, thought, appreciation, and action preferred by the groups on whose behalf it is carried out (35). The point is not to end education, but to more clearly understand on whose behalf it is carried out. The admission of the arbitrary nature of such schemes draws our attention to the arbitrary power relations sustaining them and helps us identify where and when they might be changed. As will become clearer in the discussion of the politics of everyday life, such things as community control of school rarely touch the more basic and important power relations. Corporations have a number of clear, though not clearly justified, political advantages in these power relations.

The rather strange linguistic attribution of realness to the work world and abstraction to the educational one, inscribed in everyday talk and work experiences, performs clear political functions. The conception initially functioned to protect experienced but nondegreed managers from the postwar expansion of scientific expertise and college education by providing for a contrary form of knowledge and expertise; it became a criticism of paternalistic and outdated higher education; and it functions today to privilege certain types of knowledge and learning, most importantly to privilege the corporate experience. Rarely do such terms as *practical* or *real* signify anything other than employment concerns, even though the community and family are filled with practical and real needs.

The modern advantage is not just one of content and justification, each centered on employment issues, but primarily one of the relation of person to knowledge. The conception of knowledge, grades, and degrees as objects to be acquired reproduces a specific type of instrumental orientation—definitions substitute for concepts, textbooks for treatises, and research

reports for theories. Students are led to *master* the subject matter, rather than to encounter or surrender to (properly to understand) subject matter that draws students out of and beyond themselves to new insights and new relations to the world. Conceptions of effective education and accountability schemes further hide the value premises involved and make their collective examination more difficult and seemingly unnecessary. Learning contracts and competency-based education, for example, may provide educational benefits, but they have the side effects of defining the learner, knowledge, and the act of learning in a particular manner. In each case these align extraordinarily well with corporate knowledge practices. Misgeld (1985) provided a useful analysis of the way research in instructional technologies and training dovetail with corporate goals. Says Misgeld:

Thus education is entirely assimilated to training. Research and training have in common that they do not require self-initiated insight into the purposes of the research or of the training program. They require that the interests in self-generated insight be put aside. The risk-burdened enterprise of critical self-reflection is replaced by a program for the avoidance of conflict and uncertainty. This is why behaviorally organized reform of instructional practice places much emphasis on evaluation (93).

Again the issue is not to glorify some past (which probably did not exist) as some defending liberal arts do. Given possible competing relations among kinds of knowledge and understanding, the lack of competition and the potential effects on the relation of social institutions must be noted. For example, it becomes unclear whether students today "really" write less well because of the emphasis on noncorporate literature and creative expression or simply write too well for corporate work. I am not suggesting a new answer, but pointing out that the question is not being widely raised. Education today lacks a theory of culture and society and a conception of its place in them and instead it moves between tradition and the marketplace, which involves a conflict for sure, but one unlikely to raise discussion of collective goals. Much has been made of declining math scores, but schools fail to a much larger degree to develop taste in either the elitist concept of high culture or in the more basic concept of rendering judgments on goodness and beauty.

The increasing use of textbooks participates in value extension and domination. Textbooks are seldom controversial in themselves and tend to be written in ways that skirt major theoretical divisions, particularly critical and more radical forces (McHoul 1986). The market-driven economy of text production most often results in the broadest (though often lowest) possible denominator rather than in stirring books. And this market orientation "teaches" the dominant interest, market-oriented learning. Ethnocentrism is common in texts (van Dijk 1989), but most of the ethnocentrism happens in subtle glorifications of certain lifestyles, certain types of technological developments, and certain work ethics. The tone of neutrality and certainty enforce a sense that this should be learned, and excludes critical reflection and alternatives. The lack of an authorial voice, except for a faceless expert, hides the concept of point of view, and controversy, much as the corporate report does. Leading conceptions of educational process and testing emphasize memorization, clear objectives, and making the process of "learning" easier, and thus they require texts that enable efficiency and require little effort from teachers or students. Computer-assisted texts like *Supertext* further extend the efficiency-driven "finding what is known about the topic" rather than the development of an argument or means of understanding. Learning to read slowly and critically is discouraged by boldface print, internal summaries, and providing the interpretation for the reader. Many texts today look much like *USA Today*, cater to the same audience, and carry the same duality of "U.S." and "us"—a homogenous reader and a collective author. "Learning" hence often becomes an inconvenience to quickly moving ahead. The lesson is clear. Learning should be quick and easy. Careful learning is costly and to be avoided. This metalesson of books and schooling of antieducation intersects with many compatible forces in modern society aiding and perpetuated by a particular corporate form.

Not only have the content and process of education taken on a corporate orientation, but corporations have become much more directly involved in the process of education. Corporations today spend as much on training and educational programs as society does on all of its four-year and graduate education combined (Eurich and Boyer 1985). Corporate facilities for education far exceed their public counterparts in quality. And most post-graduate education is conducted either by corporations or in community colleges with instruction often drawn from the cor-

porate ranks. Such educational programs actively teach corporate values and avoid historical analyses and the liberal arts. The historical development of these modern corporate centers of education probably differs little in character or in nobility of motive from the earlier development of church- and, later, publicly sponsored education. The singularity of value orientation and the ability to direct massive resources, however, become more of an issue as both church- and publicly sponsored educational institutions become more dependent on corporate financing and focus their curricula for the work world (Evangelauf 1985, 1987). The blurring of the differences between the public and the corporate by the domination of the corporate and the consequent loss of competing voices is significant.

Culture, Inc.: Media Entertainment and News

Further, the institutional relations between mass-media institutions and other corporate institutions contribute to the preeminence of the corporation as a social institution. The older pattern of diverse, largely privately owned media organizations has changed to centralized corporate ownership. In the 1980s alone, the number of corporations that controlled half or more of the media business declined from over 50 to under 25 (Bagdikian 1990). As Schiller (1989) reports: "A prediction made in the mid-1980s that by 1995 almost 90 percent of all communication facilities (including newspapers, broadcast outlets, cable systems, telephone lines, relays, and satellites) would be in the hands of fifteen companies is close to realization well before that date" (35). We would probably be greatly concerned if an institution like the church or state came to dominate the media, but such an eighteenth-century mindset fails to account for the actual institutional alignment today. How would people feel if the government or church produced a "commercial" (or propaganda, depending on the institution of concern) every ten to fifteen minutes on the television and had primary say over the programming? We know something of that, because we know moments in history when such domination was accepted *and* when it was rejected. We would feel oppressed if billboards had pictures of national leaders on them with encouraging statements, even if we were in agreement with the message. And we would be deeply concerned about such a dominance even if we agreed with the political or religious message. But why not with billboards depicting people drink-

ing beer and defining every aspect of value and lifestyle? The recent outcry of the artistic community over possible NEH judgments on the appropriateness of artistic expression and the possibility of new censorship must be a concern for us all. But commercial influence and indeed virtual censorship has been many times more extreme, yet it passes with occasional reference. Dominance is dominance; the question is who should be the master and when should we be outraged or have a say.

How deeply ownership patterns affect the content of media is a matter of dispute. Moreover, the issue is one of not only ownership effects but the effects on decisions, because they are made within a corporate context. How diligently will a reporter pursue a story reflecting negatively on the parent company? When does reporting become whistle-blowing? What happens when news programs have to show a profit? And how does media education handle the modern social context? The merging of reporting and public relations training in many journalism programs is merely an institutional representation of larger social forces and changes (Becker, Fruit, and Caudill 1987). The lines have long been blurred with pseudoevents and press releases, but the connections are now deeper and connected to structural lines of authority rather than to cozy arrangements. All information today, whether news, entertainment, or commercial, has to be considered as sponsored information. Such changes can hardly be seen as innocent. Rarely do journalism and radio or television programs include course-work on covering business decisions, and such reporting when discussed focuses on producing business news rather than on being the public watchdog.

The media clearly have effects on the public's relation to corporations and the work experience. As Turow (1984, 1989) argued, mass-media "models depict conduct by people and institutions along with the consequences of the conduct. Doing that, the models (a) convey rules guiding the allocation of resources for society's educational, leisure, medical, economic, media, military, and governmental activities (that is, they depict principles of institutional order); and (b) they illustrate preferred ways to employ those resources (that is, they depict styles of production and consumption)" (1989, 454-55). Many recent studies of media have demonstrated the ways that media function in cultural production. Gans (1979) and Tuchman (1978) have shown how standard media "frames" structure the content and presentation of news, thereby providing a concept of human responsibility, "objective" accounts of events, and