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Films through Critical Media Literacy**

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**Exposing Neoliberal Ideologies in Children's Books and Films through  
Critical Media Literacy**

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**Abstract**

Neoliberal free-market ideologies influence modern children's literature and entertainment in and outside of school. Through neoliberal practices, children's media become a place of frantic entertainment, consumerism, and disengagement from intellectual and justice-oriented principles in education. Dominant or mainstream children's media entails the marketization of literature and the adulteration of its critical, educational, and democratic objectives through visually tantalizing decontextualized films, books, and television programs. By exercising these business mechanisms, corporate media proliferate. This article has three main objectives: (1) to examine the impact of neoliberal ideologies such as advertising, programming, and psychological entrapment on children; (2) to analyze and expose the neoliberal principles embodied in children's literature and entertainment such as books and films; and (3) to introduce critical media literacy (CML) as a tool teachers can use with their children to guide them through a critical reading and interpretation process of social, political, and cultural messages and events reflected in media. Three main conclusions were reached; first, neoliberal practices such as advertisement, licensing, programming, and psychological entrapments immerse children into the market culture on a daily basis (Connell, 2013; Narder, 2012); second, children are influenced by what they read in books and see in television (Doherty, 2015; Giroux, 2014; Schor, 2004); mainly by neoliberal doctrines such as consumerism, competition, and individualism (Davies, 2016; Tienken, 2013); and third, CML is a literacy tool that guides children to critically read printed and visual texts in literature and entertainment, and to become aware of dominant neoliberal ideologies and practices (Alvermann, Moon, Hagwood, & Hagood, 2018).

**Keywords:** neoliberalism, critical media literacy, children, literature, education

## Introduction

During the 1970s, neoliberalism emerged as a new form of government against the radical practices in education and media (Davies & Bansel, 2007). In a neoliberal government, those who hold power regard democracies and their citizens as profitable or in service to the government; as a consequence, education and public service are the first institutions to begin the germination of neoliberal ideologies and practices (Davies, 1996; Hill & Kumar, 2012).

Neoliberalism or free-market fundamentalism, privileges individual interests over social interests, expands the gap between wealthy and powerful individuals, and propagates a pedagogy that favors entrepreneurial practices (Crouch, 2011; Harvey, 2005). Since the 1970s, neoliberalism as a predatory phenomenon has impacted the lifestyle in the United States, and has determined the economic policies and international trade in developing countries by controlling the principles and practices of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and trans-national institutions (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2011; Giroux, 2012; Reszityk, 2013; Steger & Roy, 2010).

Neoliberalism and its capitalist culture undermine education as a public good, while favoring materialism and individualism (Apple, 2012; Sandel, 2012). From a neoliberal worldview, people live a life promised by capitalism (Dawson, 2013). Such is the power of neoliberalism as a metapolicy that its reign develops multipronged practices and attacks against public education and quality pedagogy (Doherty, 2015). The neoliberal war on public education exerts a masqueraded influence against critical thinking skills, common goods, social values, and social justice, which are replaced by consumerism and capitalist market-based ideologies and practices.

The way children learn and what they learn have changed with the rise of neoliberalism and its new concepts on public education and media. Germane to education, the rhetoric of techno-instrumental exchanges and indoctrination in neoliberal practices have corrupted the meaning of education and what means to be educated, leading students to a retrograde ideology marked by a dystopian perspective of the world (Giroux, 2014).

Another consequence of the neoliberal reform is the “undercutting of the power of teachers and removing subjects such as art, literature, music, and critical thinking from the school curriculum” (Giroux, 2014, p. 33), which leads to the transformation of public schools into private enterprises (Connell, 2013; Simon, 2012). Unfortunately, in their search for funding, public schools and higher education institutions have adapted organizational trappings characteristic of corporations which by way of the universalization of managerial efforts, human interests serve corporate interests (Deetz, 1994; Glenn, 2010). Professors find tenured-track opportunities difficult to acquire and are relegated to part-time positions that generate incomes unsuited to their scholarship and profession; more so, academic subjects such as art, art history, literature, and most liberal arts are displaced by for-profit subjects such as business, marketing, engineering, and computer science, all of which stand beside technical optimism and constructions of economic Darwinism in which civic values are replaced by market values (Bousquet, 2008; Schrecker, 2010).

Ultimately, in education, “the problem isn’t a lack of money. The problem is where the money is going” (Babones, 2012). School systems seem to have a complex, business-like structure that makes it more difficult to students and teachers to exercise education in a civic and democratic manner. The corporatization and privatization of public education enhances “the profits of investors, educate students as consumers, and train young people for the low-paying

jobs of the new global marketplace” (Giroux, 2000, p.85), while attacking public schooling and human rights (Chomsky, 2000).

The purpose of this article is to: (1) examine the impact of neoliberal media market strategies such as advertising, programming, and psychological entrapment on children (Atkin, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993; Comaroff, & Comaroff, 2011; Connell, 2013; Kunkel, 2001; Linn, 2003; Narder, 2012; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999); (2) investigate and expose how neoliberal practices influence children’s literature and entertainment in books and films (Buckingham, 2003; Doherty, 2015; Giroux, 2010, 2014; Hurley, 2005; Power & Whitty, 1996; Schor, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997; Weiner, 2012); and (3) introduce critical media literacy (CML) as a tool children can use in and outside of school to identify the issues in the stories they read or watch, and to critically analyze the social, political, and racial messages embedded in children’s books and films (Alvermann, Moon, Hagwood, & Hagood, 2018; Gainer, 2010; Kellner & Share, 2007). CML is a type of literacy that focuses on the critique of media ideologies and practices printed in texts, films, and entertainment (Alvermann, et al., 2018). Moreover, CML expands the notion of literacy by considering popular culture, media entertainment and information, dominant ideologies of power, and its audience (Kellner & Share, 2007). In this article, CML is used to analyze and expose neoliberal media ideologies and practices reflected in children’s books and films.

This article first addresses the impact of neoliberal media ideologies and practices on children; second, it further explains the concept of critical media literacy; third, it shares an overview of children’s books and films; and fourth, it offers conclusions.

### **The Impact of Neoliberal Media Ideologies and Practices on Children**

This section explains the different ways neoliberal media marketing attracts children to the market business from an early age. By utilizing specific strategies, neoliberalism sells its ideologies to children through: programing, advertising, licensing, neo-marketing, cognitive and psychological entrapments, emotional insecurities, overconsumption of products, and government deregulation of the market.

Neoliberal media marketing inevitably influences children’s experiences and future lifestyles. Children’s growing access to commercial media through television, Internet, and movies is accelerated by the constant advertisement of products and services. As relayed by Roberts et al. (1999), “the average American child spends almost 40 hours a week outside of school consuming media” (p. x). This type of immersion in commercial culture increases the exposure time in which children are immersed in the marketing process (Linn, 2003; Simon, 2012). Each year, a child watches more than 40,000 commercials on television and corporate messages can reach children almost anywhere (Kunkel, 2001). As Roberts et al. (1999) further note, 65 % of children between eight- to 18-years old, and 32% of children between two- to seven-years old have televisions in their homes and bedrooms. Corporations are strongly incentivized to expand children’s already-overwhelming exposure to media. The insecurities, vulnerabilities, rebellion, and change in childhood and adolescence fatten the profit mill (Linn, 2003).

Most programming and broadcasting, such as PBS, is endorsed by licensing. This is “a practice that allows companies to market toys, clothing, and other products based on the characters associated with a program” (Linn, 2003, p. 479). Moreover, licensing allows TV

programs to play advertisements before and after the program; the problem with this practice is that some children cannot differentiate between programming and advertising, while other children watch television without parental supervision. Similarly, four- and five-year old children have trouble differentiating between a commercial and regular programming, eight-year olds cannot recognize persuasive intent in programs and adverts (Atkin, 1982; Kunkel & Roberts, 1991).

Nonetheless, children are easy prey for media corporations, which increase their profit by utilizing developmental psychology theories and principles on cognitive and psychological development addressed by Piaget (1964) and Erikson (1994). Psychologists who work for big media corporations use developmental psychology principles and practices to increase the success of corporations (Linn, 2003).

The psychological entrapment processes that advertising industries employ, are usually referred to as market segmentation or target marketing, which are neoliberal ideologies and strategies for selling their products. An example of how psychological mechanisms are utilized by advertising corporations is addressed by Tim Coffey, CEO of WonderGroup and a youth consultant in Cincinnati. He explains that “only a decade ago, advertisers lumped all kids into one broad category. Now, they realize age segmentation is essential” (Rice, 2001 as cited in Linn, 2003, p. 481). The neoliberal profit mill is based on children’s and teens’ developmental differences; thus, the marketing techniques employed in children are different from those addressed to preteens; those used for preteens are different from those used for teenagers. At the same time, unsupervised pre-teen children may be watching programs designed for teenagers or even for adults. Neoliberal media corporations make sure they foster insecurities (e.g., by means of messages and images) in children or teenagers in order to motivate them to buy the products or services that may diminish those supposed emotional insecurities.

The documentary *Consuming Kids* (2008) portrays parents’ willingness to spend money on American children under 12-years old. These economic expenses total \$700 billion, which is similar to the combined Gross Domestic Product of the United States—\$704 billion. This is more than what the 115 poorest countries in the world make in a year. According to Michael Brody, a child psychiatrist, “kids are inundated; they are buried in this media bliss” as they multitask with media; that is, they use more than one media gadget at the same time (*Consuming Kids*, 2008).

In the 1950s, and 60s, children’s advertising was cheap, and in the late 1970s the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) banned some TV adverts and advertising practices that were seemingly deceiving children. For example, there were advertisements that encouraged children to eat sugar cereals, which caused cavities and other dental issues. In 1979 the U. S. Congress, under the pressure of marketers, enacted the Act of 1980, which stated that the FTC “shall not have any authority to promulgate any rule in children’s advertising” (*Consuming Kids*, 2008). Because the FTC is banned, children are deceived by misleading advertisements.

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the government adopted the neoliberal doctrine and hence started promoting market de-regulation; in this way, businesses and corporations were liberated from the social responsiveness to protect the public goods and instead impose profit over people’s well-being and environment conservation (Gobby, 2013; Weiner, 2012).

As a result, TV advertising went through immediate deregulation. This de-regulation of advertisement hooks children at a psychological and emotional level. Susan Linn, Director of the Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood, gave an example of a five-year old girl saying that *Superman Sponge Bob Macaroni and Cheese* was better than any other macaroni. When the girl

was asked if she ever tasted the macaroni, she said no. So, she was asked again, how do you know they are the best if you have never tasted them? She replied that she knew they taste better. Linn asked, how do you discuss with a five-year old that just because the Sponge Bob macaroni is advertised it does not mean is the best? Allen Kanner, a child and family psychologist, explained that marketers know the difference between the interests of a three-year old and a five-year old. For instance, for a three-year old, adverts must be played much slower and must contain round figures. Likewise, Juliet Shor, a professor of sociology at Boston College, explained that marketers use ethnography research in which children are filmed in the bathroom taking a bath or a shower, or interacting in friend circles in order to study how children behave socially and thus, to produce new health or beauty products.

Robert Reiher, the Youth Marketer and Founder of E-Smart Choice, (Consuming Kids, 2008), explains that marketers use “neo-marketing,” which consists of putting a child through a magnetic resonance image tests (MRI), and studying what happens in the brain based on lightening (e.g., to study what stimulates certain parts of the brain), and studying eye movement or the blinking of the eyes to determine ad content. For instance, when children blink more often, ads are changed so they can continue mesmerizing children for longer periods of time. Corporate media also depends on the fact that children do not understand persuasive messages in advertising.

Children suffer several consequences from the over consumption of media and goods. One of those consequences is that 4.4 million children between four- and seven-years old suffer from bipolar disorders and are diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Consuming Kids, 2008). In a way, children are acquiring diseases usually suffered by adults, such as, depression, obesity, Type II diabetes, and hypertension. Gary Ruskin, Executive Director of Commercial Alert, explained that, “schools should promote reason but adverts subvert reason” (Consuming Kids, 2008). Unfortunately, some children have left behind the old make-believe games in which they use their imagination and play according to their own life perspectives and identities.

### **Critical Media Literacy**

In schools, teachers have an important role to guide their students to become critical readers capable of deconstructing children’s literature and entertainment in the media field. Developing critical awareness of embedded textual and visual messages in popular media allows students to discover and critique movies, books, magazines, videos, economic, political, cultural, and social messages (Dyson, 1997; Finders, 1996; Lewis, 1997). Critical media literacy helps students evaluate neoliberal ideologies, power, stereotypes so engrained in literature and entertainment. Furthermore, critical media literacy is a tool that alternatively rebuilds education, identity, and democracy in order to expose and evaluate media content in an intelligent manner (Kellner & Share, 2007). Meaning-making through critical media literacy is a cultural and collaborative act for negotiating meaning inside and outside of classroom that layers the multi-representation of neoliberal and ideological realms such as media power, control, identity, language, and domination in different contexts (Ang, 2002; Baker & Luke, 1991; Buckingham, 1998; Christian-Smith, 1997).

Critical media literacy (CML) provides children and adults with a tool to access, read, and interpret printed and non-printed texts that form part of daily life constructions of knowledge

regarding social, cultural, political, and economic stances of the world (Alvermann et al., 2018; Gainer, 2010; Hilton, 1996; Luke, 1997). CML is a legitimate and democratic means for helping citizens to develop their literacy and critical thinking skills. By employing critical media literacy, a possible solution can be reached against the practices of neoliberalism in and outside of school, and their impact on children. At the same time, there is a need to reflect on the three major dimensions of CML:

(1) closely examining how corporate for-profit mainstream media work, in terms of economic, political, social, and cultural power, (2) developing abilities and consciousness for searching, creating, developing, and supporting alternative non-profit and independent public-interest media; and (3) understanding the educators' responsibility to help students become critical-media's literate and actively engaged in alternative media use and development (Torres & Mercado, 2006, p. 261).

The three dimensions of CML extrapolate with the objectives of conglomerate for-profit media, which seeks to restrict information from the public (Buckingham, 2003). Moreover, hidden information is adulterated through manufacturing processes that obstinately control the information people get and the things people watch or listen to.

How can people, especially children, become literate if authentic information of what is happening in the world (in our world) is withheld from us? Who decides what kind of news should be reported or not? Who decides what media should be about? Being literate means to be prepared to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). It seems as if children are brainwashed while becoming the objects of a conscientious hegemony, which involves a "combination of consent and coercion" (Fiske, 1993, p. 266). By listening without problematizing events, people are unconsciously giving the corporate media consent to cultivate their messages in the minds of children.

The imposition of information is known as cultivation theory, which utilizes the same or similar strategies employed by corporate media creators to not only prevent that real information reaches its audience, but also to distort stories, and to persuade people to believe, to do, or to feel in certain ways often not favorable to people's interests. Through cultivation theory, "media myths are not only manufactured but cultivated through comprehensive propaganda. It becomes detrimental to keep a subtle control of the public mind" (Gerbner, 1997, p. 266), and to be exposed to corporate and government crosspollination (Torres & Mercado, 2006), because it is through the resonance effect and repetition of advertising and films that people become mentally anesthetized and manipulated (Torres & Mercado, 2006).

### **Overview of Children's Literature: Books and Films**

Through media entertainment and children's literature, neoliberal ideologies and practices have their way to the public audience. Some characteristics or principles of neoliberalism that are reflected in children's literature and entertainment in media are, consumerism, competition, and individualism.

Consumerism, as an economic orientation concentrated on the buying and selling of products and services, places an emphasis on obtaining and accumulating material possessions for social or personal gratification (Foster, 2000; Tienken, 2013; Veblen, 1994/1899). Likewise,



consumerism is most noted when consumers hoard on goods first introduced and announced in media. Proponents of consumerism attest that the more goods are consumed the more developed a society becomes since it is an indicator of the gross domestic product index (GDP), and thus, of society's well-being. Although modernization causes consumerism and consumerism leads to modernization, Freire (2000) warns against them because they do not equal social well-being or quality of life. Competition is the maximization of utility, or the maximization of sellers and consumers (Boltanski, 2012; Walras, 1954). In the same manner, competition has been a crucial aspect in the market competition of democratic societies due to its liberal traditions in selling and buying goods and services; however, it may not be valued at the moral, cultural, and social level due its agenda to obtain social control (Davies, 2016; Lahann & Reagan, 2011). Competition, as promoted in children's literature and entertainment lures even the youngest members of families to become part of this neoliberal trend. The problem is that young adults and children may or may not have acquired the necessary critical media literacy skills that help them identify the neoliberal competitive practices in media culture. For this type of media consumers, competition for acquiring or getting access to the objects and services becomes their priority. Individualism is another principle of neoliberalism in which people freely bring the development of markets to their communities, which causes social and economic change, and competition (Gray & Lawrence, 2001). Through television, films, programming, and literature, individualism has caused disintegration among diverse cultural groups and the institution of family. These disintegrative effects influence collective work and family life and values due to the individual mentality people learn daily (Gill & Donaghue, 2016; Matza, 2012).

To help fight against neoliberal principles, CML is beneficial for guiding readers to critically read texts, images, and films and to evaluate them from a social, political, and economic position (Buckingham, 1998; Hilton, 1996). CML also helps students and young adults to expose and evaluate consumerism, competition, individualism, and power symbolisms in media contexts

This section offers a critical analysis of (1) the children's books and films that carry neoliberal media messages about beauty, race, class, and gender; and (2) children's interpretations of those literacy materials based on neoliberal media culture.

The power of media may represent or underrepresent ethnic groups in children's books and in other forms of media sources. The transformation of children's identities and subjectivities into consumers is what reinforces today's capitalist practices in media and in education. However, Hurley (2005) explained that children need to see themselves reflected in books and films in a positive manner. Unfortunately, neoliberal and profit-based literacy materials reinforce a negative self-image of children of color and of diverse ethnicities. The question at hand is, how can children develop an identity and a positive self-image if media displays images that do not reflect their social status and narrative styles?

To answer with an example, an important six-month ethnographic study was conducted by Yeoman (1999) at a public urban Canadian school with 9- to 11- year old ethnic minority students in a fourth- and fifth-grade classroom. Students were presented with conventional and alternative stories of traditional storylines, plots, and protagonists that represent minority groups.

The students read versions of *Cinderella* such as *The Talking Eggs* (San Souci, 1989), a Creole folktale from Louisiana in which the main character is Blanche, a black girl. Then, the children examined *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987), another Cinderella story in which a black heroine is represented. Children used their intertextual knowledge of the classical *Cinderella* (Disney, 1950) and compared it to these two versions of the story. Yeoman (1999) reported that children "almost invariably drew white characters no matter what color they were

themselves” (p. 437). In this research, three of the children gave explanations regarding their drawings, and the following were some of their responses:

One child explained that she drew Blanche like Cinderella and not like Mufaro’s daughter Nyasha, because...“I mostly thought she would get married and live happily ever after”. Note, however, that Blanche does not marry in the story. Another child said, “I imagined her dark, but I’m drawing her blonde”. When asked why, the child said she did not know. A third child said she “drew her yellow ...because she was good, so I wanted to make her pretty” (p. 437-438).

The first child was dark-skinned with a Chilean background, the second child was African-Canadian, and the third child was dark-skinned. The students considered “White” as something good and beautiful that presumably leads to a happy ending in the story. Even though the students read a book set that portrayed black characters, they had been influenced through neoliberal ideologies such as color symbolism to connote beauty and goodness to whiteness, and black with evil and ugliness.

On the other hand, fairy tale princesses encountered in Disney films and other films enforce neoliberal racial ideologies and biases and a color binary reproduced by the culture industry that supports white privilege. McIntosh (1988) described white privilege as “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (p.1). For McIntosh, whites are not taught to see white privilege because it is constructed by unearned assets inherited by means of skin color.

Nonetheless, white privilege is reflected in neoliberal-oriented films and books, for example, in the story, *Snow White* (Grimm, 1949), Snow White is described as having “skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony” (Grimm, 1949). The color symbolism of whiteness in fairy tale stories may cause children to desire to become like those princesses depicted in the stories. The question is how ethnic groups are able to see or describe themselves in these images according to the descriptions that fairy tale books and films contain regarding the physical attributes of what makes one beautiful? According to Bishop (1983):

If literature is a mirror that reflects human life, then all children who read or are read to need to see themselves reflected as part of humanity. If they are not, or if their reflections are distorted and ridiculous, there is a danger that they will absorb negative messages about themselves and people like them. Those who see only themselves or who [are] exposed to errors and misinterpretations are miseducated into a false sense of superiority, and the harm is doubly done (p. 43).

Written or visual stories are meant to help children to see the world critically and to enhance a positive formation of their self-image. The absence of people of color or the misrepresentation of ethnic groups causes dangerous and detrimental effects in children’s identities. According to Schor (2004):

Corporations have infiltrated the core activities and institutions of childhood, with virtually no resistance from government or parents. Advertising is widespread in schools. Electronic media are replacing conventional play. We have become a nation that places a lower priority on teaching its children how to thrive socially, intellectually, even spiritually, than it does on

training them to consume. The long term consequences of this development are ominous (p. 13).

The question at hand is how teachers and parents can protect children from the competitive pressures of the free market. What are the little screens, such as television, cinema and Internet teaching children? How do the brutal advertising mechanisms and practices of consumerism and conformity affect children's thinking? What has the experience of childhood become?

Films transmit neoliberal ideologies through stories and fantasies that can be examined using critical media literacy. Children's literature and entertainment are fast and effective ways for expanding ideas of neoliberal power such as individualism, consumerism, and competition; however, they are tools that transmit concepts of racism, beauty, and identity (Simon, 2012; Zipes, 2009). One of the ways neoliberal ideologies are propagated in media is through film corporations that patronize a dreamlike world that represent a dominant messages of beauty, race, and identity; examples of those film corporations are: Walt Disney Pictures, Warner Brothers Animation, Columbia Pictures, DreamWorks Animation, Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Animation, and Paramount Pictures.

From an early age, children are exposed to animated films that represent a dominant perspective of identity, beauty, and the world. Films such as, *The Little Mermaid*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, and more recently, *Tangled* and *Frozen*, promote stereotypical representations of minority groups and their identities based on race, class, gender, and language. For example, Disney's *Little Mermaid* (1989) portrays specified gender roles. As in most Disney films, women are portrayed as being dependent on men. In the story, Ariel is depicted as being white and skinny— modern definitions of beauty. Ariel falls in love with Eric. Subsequently, Ariel's desire to detach herself from Triton's parental control drove her to Ursula. During her visit in Ursula's cave, Ariel traded her voice for a pair of human legs that allowed her to get closer to Eric. Ursula then told Ariel that having a voice is not that important because possessing physical beauty is enough for her to have a place in society. In this film, the female gender defines its power in connection to dominant male narratives. Unfortunately, in other Disney stories, women do not possess power but rather must construct their identities by marrying the prince of the story, and expectedly, to live happily ever after. Narratives such as these send a denigrating message to girls by implicitly stating they do not have a social voice or strength to search for their own happiness and place in society as civic agents without being influenced or attached to a man—a prince. These types of messages are reflected not only in films, but in picture books and entertainment (Hearne & Sutton, 1993). This type of visual experience is powerful since it has a magical beauty that children tend to compare to their own lives. Therefore, visual symbols in picture books, animated cartoons, or films are a meaning model for what culture and aesthetics should mean (Genova, 1979). Aesthetic and fantasy elements are devices used by film companies to attract and motivate a child to consume, and ultimately, to introduce them to the *kinder culture*, which proliferates from corporate, competitive, and technological production (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997).

## Conclusion

This article explored multiple ways neoliberal ideologies are embodied in children's literature and media entertainment. Based on the three objectives of the paper, three conclusions

are drawn. First, neoliberal media market strategies such as advertisement, licensing, programming, and psychological entrapments impact children by immersing them and exposing them to the market culture on a daily basis (Atkin, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993; Comaroff, & Comaroff, 2011; Connell, 2013; Kunkel, 2001; Linn, 2003; Narder, 2012; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999; Simon, 2012). For example, an American child spends around 40 hours per week consuming media outside of school, and watch over 40,000 commercials (Kunkel, 2001; Roberts et al., 1999).

Licensing is another neoliberal tactic television programs use for marketing clothing, toys, and other goods to young audiences. More importantly, licensing allows advertisements to be played before and after a program, which can make it difficult for children to differentiate between the beginning and the end of a commercial and programming or to recognize persuasive intent in commercials and programming (Atkin, 1982; Kunkel & Roberts, 1991; Linn, 2003).

Neoliberal corporations use media as a tool to attract children into a psychological entrapment that uses their desires, imagination, and developmental stages to create psychological and emotional needs (Linn, 2003). To do this, corporations used age segmentation to produce commercials and products apt for a child's specific age based on developmental differences (Linn, 2003). Such commercials and products are made to motivate young consumers to buy in order to treat or nourish their emotions or solve problems.

Food advertisements impact children and their health; that is, there is no regulation of programming regarding the type of food quality being advertised (Consuming Kids, 2008). Children are inundated with food commercials that mislead them to make the wrong choice when purchasing food. As a consequence, children suffer diseases only known to adults such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, bipolar disorders, and ADHD (Consuming Kids, 2008).

Licensing, psychological entrapments, and food advertisements are byproducts of the implementation of neoliberal doctrines in the United States back in the 1970s; a doctrine that favors profit over citizens' well-being and quality of life (Gobby, 2013; Weiner, 2012).

Second, this paper exposed and investigated the different ways neoliberal practices influence children's literature and entertainment in books and films (Buckingham, 2003; Doherty, 2015; Giroux, 2010, 2014; Hurley, 2005; Power & Whitty, 1996; Schor, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997; Weiner, 2012). Dominant or mainstream children's literature and entertainment are infused with neoliberal doctrines such as consumerism, competition, and individualism.

Through consumerism, children and young consumers form part of the market to pursue goods, services, and socio-personal gratification (Foster, 2000; Tienken, 2013; Veblen, 1994/1899). Closely related to consumerism is competition, which seeks to maximize sellers and consumers while seeking to obtain social and economic control regardless of moral, ethical, and cultural values (Boltanski, 2012; Davies, 2016; Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Walras, 1954). Young consumers compete among themselves for having access to services or possessions of the latest gadget; this type of competition develops markets at the expense of social circles like family and community collaboration in favor of individualism. With individualism, consumers' priority is to compete for the possession of materials; this preoccupation has disintegrative effects of children's identities, and family life and values (Gill & Donaghue, 2016; Gray & Lawrence, 2001; Matza, 2012).

Third, CML is an analysis mechanism for identifying and for critically examining social, political, economic, and racial issues or events reflected in media (Alvermann, Moon, Hagwood, & Hagood, 2018; Gainer, 2010; Kellner & Share, 2007).

As an analysis tool, CML should be used inside and outside of the classroom to promote and enhance critical media literacy skills that help children and young adults expose and evaluate neoliberal ideologies reflected in media culture such as consumerism, competition, individualism. CML is a type of literacy that guide readers to construct knowledge and to layer social, political, and cultural positions embedded in media (Buckingham, 1998; Hilton, 1996). Furthermore, CML expose issues of misrepresentation and power in literature that are related to race, class, gender, identity, and beauty (Hurley, 2005; Yeoman, 1999). Neoliberal and profit-driven books and films misrepresent or do not represent the identities and images of diverse ethnic groups; unfortunately, children may not identify or see themselves in these images, and instead explore meaningless dominant ideas of identity and beauty (Genova, 1979; Hearne & Sutton, 1993; Schor, 2004; Simon, 2012; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997; Yeoman, 1999; Zipes, 2009).

Finally, the problem is not to be exposed to media, but not to be able to interpret and to critically examine hidden messages and stereotypes. For this reason, CML skills need to be acquired by children in order to become conscious of neoliberal dominant ideologies and to critically read and discuss social, political, and cultural messages in literature and entertainment at home and at school (Dyson, 1997; Finders, 1996; Lewis, 1997).

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