

# To Discipline and Enforce: Surveillance and Spectacle in State Reform of Higher Education

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**ABSTRACT** Drawing from concepts developed by the social theorists Michel Foucault and Guy Debord on the exertion of political power in contemporary society, this paper analyzes the restructuring of public higher education systems initiated by governors, legislatures and state higher education boards. The paper argues that the primary features of restructuring are (1) increased surveillance of the behaviours and attitudes of the constituents within colleges and universities by the state and (2) the spectacularization of reform by state governments. Surveillance and spectacle aim at the disciplining of individuals and enforcement of state policy and are forms of direct and ideological social control. They imply a transformation of relations between institutions and the state, particularly the subordination of higher learning to state policy objectives.

**Keywords:** Postsecondary education, reform, spectacle, surveillance

## Postsecondary Reform and Social Control

The late 1990s and early 2000s were a period of intense effort by state governors and legislatures in the United States to restructure and reform the coordination and governance of higher education as a means of achieving state goals that include (1) forcing greater accountability and fiscal responsibility, (2) promoting economic development, and (3) aligning institutional behaviours with state policy priorities (Brace et al. 1999). While significant reform and accountability measures were initiated in most states during the 1990s and continue in the early 21st century, fundamental structural change in state-level coordination and governance occurred in many states, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Kansas, New Jersey, and Kentucky. An

important component of each of these restructuring efforts was the realignment of the culture and behaviour of postsecondary institutions with critical state policy goals, particularly in the areas of accountability, finance, and the public purposes of higher education (McGuinness 1999; Dill 2001). However, these reform efforts also generated new images of the relationship between higher education and other social institutions, most notably state governments and business.

The restructuring of postsecondary education in states such as Kentucky, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Montana are particularly important cases of state-level reform of higher education because they followed and were conceived as a component of the

totality of the state's reform of education. Among other changes, postsecondary reform across the nation (1) strengthened the power and authority of state coordinating boards, (2) established an array of accountability measures of institutional and system performance, (3) elevated economic development as a primary policy goal higher education is intended to support, and (4) created state-financed trust funds or categorical programs that were intended to realign programmatic priorities. Another significant change promoted by postsecondary reform is the communication about the role of the state in higher education and the concept that higher education is a vehicle for the achievement of public policy goals articulated by the state.

The research literature and policy analyses of state-level higher education reform since the 1990s have done little to situate this important societal dynamic in a broader societal context. However, it is an important substantive question to ask about the social sources and consequences of state-driven reform in higher education. Further, existing literature on the topic of the relationship between reform and higher education has not analyzed the changing relationship between the state and higher education from the standpoint of critical social theory. Instead, this important phenomenon has been almost entirely analyzed through the lens of a pluralist or functionalist approach to the role of the state in society. Pluralism and functionalism maximize the use of concepts and assumptions that emphasize reciprocity and equity in the political process. Conversely, they also minimize the use of concepts and assumptions that enable observers to identify conflict, hierarchy, and processes of force and fraud in the construction of political reality. Following this observation, it is important to understand how reform functions as direct and ideological social control through initiatives designed to discipline individuals and enforce state policy.

In an effort to respond to the one-sided, consensus-oriented understanding of state-level postsecondary reform, this paper discusses postsecondary reform as a form of direct and ideological social control dependent upon processes of surveillance and spectacle. An important outcome of the

restructuring of higher education has been a transformation of relations between institutions and the state, particularly the subordination of higher learning to state interests. The paper examines the mutual relationships between higher education and the operation of state-level reform of higher education, particularly the extent to which the new image of higher education works to enforce, control, and discipline behaviour and the knowledge process in society through surveillance and spectacle (Vinson and Ross 2003). The paper explores the extent to which the restructuring of higher education operates to normalize and universalize the interests of economically and politically powerful groups in the state policy process. We take on the questions of how and to what extent higher education reforms entail *surveillance* (Foucault 1995) and *spectacle* (Debord 1994) as methods of discipline and enforcement.

The specific questions the paper attempts to address include:

1. To what extent can the contemporary state-driven reform of higher education be understood as a form of direct and ideological social control involving the fusion of surveillance and spectacle?
2. Within what contexts and through what mechanisms does the fusion of surveillance and spectacle occur within state postsecondary reform? What are the practical consequences of the fusion of surveillance and spectacle in state postsecondary reform?
3. What are the implications of the analysis of surveillance and spectacle in state-level reform of postsecondary education for critical scholarship on higher education?

Following the initial analysis by Vinson and Ross (2003) and drawing from critical studies of the notion of *image* by Barthes (1977) and Bakhtin (1981), *surveillance* by Foucault (1995), and *spectacle* by Debord (1994), the paper proceeds by discussing (1) the role of image in the contemporary societal merging of surveillance and spectacle as a form of direct and ideological social control, (2) higher education reform as hegemonic image that functions to discipline individuals and organizations and enforce the interests of economically and politically powerful

groups, (3) the dimensions of reform on the image of higher education presented in media and the programming of institutions, and (4) the implications of Debord's concepts of *dérive* and *détournement* as modes of resistance in critical scholarship (1981a; 1981b). We argue that higher education reform operates as hegemonic image that is constructed within the existing fusion of surveillance and spectacle. As such, it has potentially oppressive dimensions that deserve critique and opposition. The paper concludes that *dérive* and *détournement* provide an initial, but incomplete, scholarly counter-maneuver aimed at challenging and resisting increased state control over the knowledge process in society.

### Surveillance and Spectacle as Forms of Social Control

Critical social theory and the sociological study of political order have both discovered that images are a basic component of the social construction of reality and operate fundamentally to control human behaviour and shape human thought within institutional contexts. Images are generated and located both physically and ideologically within the complex social and cultural totality of advanced state capitalism. They also tend to reinforce existing power and exchange relations on the level of human cognition and the structure of political power within advanced capitalism. Images are generally created by those who own and control the means of communications, particularly mass communications, or who are otherwise able to seize control of the processes of reality construction in society. Image has a dialectical relationship with power: power creates and elevates images to hegemonic status and is bolstered by them, while images simultaneously create and are created by power. While the relationship between image and power is mutually reinforcing, this is not to say that image never contradicts power or that competing images never vie for predominance in the social and cultural totality. Hegemonic images are images that achieve a significant measure of control over human behaviour and cognition, and are also controlled and manipulated by powerful social groups.

Understanding the social reality of image under advanced state capitalism requires the study of the

milieu in which images are produced, how they shape behaviour, and the social, political, and economic interests they serve. This means that the study of images associated with higher education must focus attention on the relationship between higher learning and the social and cultural patterns of the global totality of capitalism. Central to the global totality of advanced capitalism is the role of the state as the primary agent of social control through its activities in planning, reality definition, and the maintenance of social control through direct coercion. In the era of state capitalism, the essential role of the state is to mitigate the conflicts and contradictions that threaten the stability of this socio-historical formation. The core functions of the state under advanced capitalism include the *enforcement* of those norms and patterns that mitigate conflict, crisis, and contradiction, which occurs partially through the *disciplining* of individuals, groups, and organizations that pose a potential challenge to existing power and exchange relations.

Discipline and enforcement occur under advanced state capitalism largely through the vehicles of *surveillance* and *spectacle*. In the contemporary milieu of advanced capitalism, the fusion of *surveillance* and *spectacle* produces, maintains, and propagates controlling images that enforce prevailing societal norms by disciplining the thoughts and behaviours of individuals and groups. As an image or an ensemble of images, higher education reform can never reflect the complexities of the social organization of higher learning, but it does function as a mechanism of social control.

### Surveillance and Social Control

In his study of the birth of the prison, Michel Foucault (1995) identified the process of surveillance as a basic means by which power is exercised and social control is maintained in contemporary society. Foucault clearly viewed power not as an entity but as a network that operates within institutional contexts. While *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* is primarily concerned with the incipient social organization of the prison as a modern form of punishment, Foucault was extremely interested in discipline and enforcement as social processes situated in a broader

socio-historical environment. The social organization of the prison becomes a means for understanding the structure of discipline and enforcement in society and the exercise of power through surveillance.

An important point of departure in Foucault's discussion of surveillance is Jeremy Bentham's design of the modern prison, the Panopticon, which is physically structured in a manner that enables the warders to observe continuously the behaviour of the prisoners. The Panopticon is a social and cultural totality that physically permits the "hierarchical observation" of the many by the few, and socially and culturally supports the right of the few to make "normalizing judgments" about the behaviour of the many. For Foucault, surveillance represents an enforcing and disciplinary power emergent from a technological base that provides infinite, automatic, and unobtrusive opportunities for the few to observe the many. Advanced telecommunications technologies offer cultural and political elites very sophisticated tools to monitor and track human behaviour. Technologies such as "Carnivore," the FBI's email tapping framework, and "Echelon," the National Security Agency's program for monitoring virtually all worldwide telecommunications, are powerful surveillance technologies at the service of the government. These macro-level surveillance technologies supplement some of the more mundane forms of surveillance found in surveillance cameras, "nanny cams," radio telemetry, geographic information systems, global positioning systems, and "cookies" deposited by corporate and governmental websites into the personal computers of customers and citizens.

The uses and outcomes of these technologies must be understood contextually in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political trends. For instance, the War on Terrorism (or whatever it is called today) and the USA Patriot Act provide an important political and legal context for understanding the uses and outcomes of Carnivore and Echelon since September 11, 2001. Each of these contexts, however, reflects and reinforces an important feature of cultural life in the 21st century in the United States: the desire and opportunity to observe and to be observed. The social imperative to see and be seen includes both *how* we are seeing and being seen, and the *fact that* we are

seeing and being seen. This cultural imperative is referenced by cultural images such as Warhol's "fifteen minutes of fame," Orwell's "Big Brother," political polling, strategic marketing, "reality-based" television series such as *Real TV* and *Survivor*, and talk shows that feature celebrity wannabes as their guests, such as *Jerry Springer*, *Dr. Phil*, and *Judge Judy*. The proliferation of webcams and cell phones with digital video cameras make it possible to see and be seen simultaneously and continuously, suggesting a technological and cultural merging of voyeurism and exhibitionism. (Consider as well, of course, Facebook, Twitter, texting, YouTube, and so on.)

For Foucault, surveillance resolves the problem of political order in the modern world because technology and cultural norms encourage the procurement of "the instantaneous view of a great multitude" for a small number of observers, or even a single individual. Foucault argues that community and public life in civil society are no longer significant mediators of human behaviour in advanced societies. We are left, on the one hand, with individuals, whose selves, goals, and purposes are highly privatized and isolated, and, on the other hand, the state, which has become increasingly dominant among social institutions. As a consequence, social relations can be regulated only in the form of surveillance by the state and its collusion with large-scale organizations, such as multinational corporations, that provide technological support for a social system that is based on the observation of the many by the few.

Foucault's libertarian and antistatist theory of surveillance presents a compelling picture of the maintenance of political order in modern society. He argued that the role of surveillance in regulating social life increased in importance with the birth of the modern prison. He acknowledged that other forms of social control predominated in previous historical periods. Specifically, the spectacle was the primary vehicle for promulgating controlling images in antiquity. The spectacle is the obverse of surveillance, according to Foucault. While surveillance refers to the observation of the many by the few, spectacle is the observation of the few by the many. In Foucault's terms, spectacle renders a small number of objects or images accessible to a multitude of people.

Thus, spectacular architecture and communications strategies operated to ensure this form of observation and were possible because of the predominance of public life over private life. Temples, theatres, circuses, festivals, and coliseums were constructed to form society into “a single great body” and to reinvigorate public life and public purposes. Foucault concluded that the spectacle as a form of social control became obsolete in the modern period because of the need to maintain order in a hierarchical society that lacks the mediating organizational structures of public life.

### Spectacle and Social Control

Situationist philosopher Guy Debord argued that spectacle describes contemporary society as well as antiquity. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord (1994) maintained that “the whole of life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (12). For Debord, the society of the spectacle defines a societal totality in which reality is replaced by image; life becomes advertised life. The images generated by information systems, marketing, advertising, and public relations obtain and pursue a reality *sui generis*. They are distinct from, not merged with, the lived experience of humans. The society of the spectacle is a form of alienation in which “being” is collapsed into “appearing,” in which the image becomes a distorted and disconnected form of communication that mediates all social relationships (Best 1994; Debord 1994, 1998).

For Debord, the spectacle is not merely a collection of images. Instead, “it is a social relationship between people mediated by images” (Debord 1994:12). Debord argues that the concept of spectacle helps us understand a wide array of disparate social phenomena. “Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance” (14). In concert with Foucault, Debord understood that the mediating structures of civil society, community, and public life have disappeared. In Debord’s critique, there remains the isolated, privatized individual whose social rela-

tionships are mediated by and subjected to the state and the production process (as opposed to participatory community).

Economically, Debord asserts that the spectacle subjects living human beings to “its will to the extent that the economy has brought them under its sway. For the spectacle is simply the economic realm developing for itself—at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the producers” (Debord 1994:16). He notes that earlier stages of the economy’s domination of society included a downgrading of *being* into *having*. The present stage of social development, however, entails a shift in emphasis from *having* to *appearing*. He indicates that all *effective having* “must now derive both its immediate prestige and its ultimate *raison d’être* from appearances” (16).

At the base of the society of the spectacle is the division of labour produced by the specialization of political power. “The specialized role played by the spectacle is that of spokesperson for all other activities ... and the source of the only discourse which society allows itself to hear” (Debord 1994:28). Politically, the spectacle is an endless discourse “upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise. The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power’s totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence” (29). The spectacle’s division of society into those who wield power and those who passively observe or contemplate the spectacle “is inseparable from the modern State, which, as the product of the social division of labor and the organ of class rule, is the general form of all social division” (30).

For Debord, the spectacle maintains its own regime of control and discipline, differentiated from surveillance and the Panopticon. The spectacle exists for its own reproduction and, through the economic and political realms, subordinates all human life to its needs. It controls by isolating and fragmenting, distorting communication, alienating human action, and restructuring communication to ensure one-way, instantaneous messaging. It operates to mitigate community and dialogue and, thus, to control image, conflict, and change. Those who control images have the ability to mystify being and hierarchical power relations within the spectacle.

Both Foucault and Debord articulated libertarian and antistatist visions of power, authority, and control in contemporary society. Both are centrally concerned with the role of the state and the mechanisms it uses to ensure direct and ideological social control in a society characterized by a loss of community and the structures of civil society that mediate relationships among people. Foucault's studies envisioned a Panopticon of surveillance. Debord's studies envisioned society as a collection of spectacles where appearance is more important than being. What is unique today is the merging of surveillance and spectacle where it is technologically possible and culturally desirable to see and be seen simultaneously and continuously. The potential of a totally administered society becomes more real as culture and technology become media through which everyone can watch everyone across all time and space. At the extreme, society becomes nothing more than a totality of isolated individuals incessantly under surveillance whose relationships are mediated by images.

Postsecondary reform provides one case in which the merger of surveillance and spectacle can be understood, and which can itself be understood as surveillance and spectacle. One example of the operation of surveillance is the hierarchical observation of the attitudes, behaviours, and performances of institutions, programs, faculty/staff, and students within higher education. An example of spectacle occurs in the presentation and reporting of institutional and system performance to higher education's many constituencies. Both surveillance and spectacle elevate image above authenticity and operate as vehicles of social control, political domination, and cultural conformity.

### **Postsecondary Reform, Surveillance, and Spectacle**

The 1980s and 1990s brought broader responsibility to state coordinating and governing boards as issues pertaining to access, quality, and cost became the primary concern for state policymakers. Epper (1996), McGuinness (1999), and Richardson et al. (1999) found that the roles and functions of state boards experienced a fundamental shift as governors and legislators became more interested in the quality of higher edu-

cation. Policy initiatives were introduced in the 1980s and used by state boards to satisfy their external constituencies that included incentive-based and competitive funding, mandates for student assessment, and performance-oriented accountability reports. The 1990s brought even more aggressive actions and policies from state boards as concerns regarding commitment to undergraduate teaching, faculty workload, and overall institutional efficiency grew. Additionally, performance indicators and performance funding programs were implemented to monitor institutional effectiveness and institutionalize reform efforts (Burke and Associates 2002; Epper 1996).

While every state has some form of state-level coordination, the nature and magnitude of regulation differs somewhat from state to state. Factors that shape differences among states include the varying nature of state history, structure, culture, law, educational standards, and political tradition, all of which influence the practices of state postsecondary coordinating or governing boards (Volkwein and Malik 1997). In heavily regulated environments, for example, public universities are treated like "state agencies" that have less flexibility in personnel, financial, and academic matters (Volkwein and Malik 1997). Regardless of the type of coordinating or governing environment, pressure has mounted for public higher education systems to become more responsive to public needs as mediated by state governments. As Epper (1999:2) suggests, the "customers of higher education (namely students, communities, and businesses) want educational services delivered to them conveniently and cost-effectively."

The initiatives of state coordinating and governance boards can have dramatic implications for both the state and colleges and universities. Hines (1988) suggested that higher education has a vested interest in the development of the economy of state capitalism. The state itself benefits from the knowledge, technology, and graduates generated by colleges and universities. The alignment of institutional behaviour and state policy is frequently viewed by policymakers and institutional administrators as a partnership which both parties must actively promote and support (Hines 1988). Governors and state legislators are no longer receptive to traditional appeals for

institutional autonomy that characterized much of higher education in the past. As Alexander (2000) suggests, with greater expectations being placed on it, higher education is obliged to examine itself or be examined by others. This observation reflects the increasing societal requirement that colleges and universities must become more responsive to national economic trends and new governmental demands for increased performance and improved alignment with public policies. To this end “higher education must understand the impetus and the nature of support for strategies aimed at institutional improvement and accountability” (Welsh and Metcalf 2003:446).

With higher expectations for accountability and effectiveness at the state level elevated, institutional administrators and strategic planners are crafting institutional plans to embrace and contribute to state initiatives. As suggested by Welsh and Metcalf (2003), “the higher education community has an increased interest in responding to rising demands for accountability by generating information that can inform internal planning... as well as inform external audiences” (446). At the state level, performance-based planning, accountability, and funding have become convenient means for states to align institutional behaviour with state priorities. Comparison tables, scorecards, national rankings, and institutional profiles are some of the popular devices developed by governing officials to compare institutional performance measurements (Alexander 2000). If institutions fail to meet state objectives or to fulfill state imposed thresholds, then they are threatened with a variety of fiscal and programmatic sanctions. These consequences provide a major impetus for institutional administrators and planners to align institutional priorities with state interests. Additionally, states have placed an increased emphasis on the role of postsecondary education in workforce development, business partnerships, and the creation of new markets through research and development. By designating and delegating responsibilities to individual campuses, states are now requiring colleges and universities to integrate state initiatives into institutional plans.

While states have become much more directive in the life of postsecondary education in the United

States, there is still considerable conflict and criticism of the role of state higher education boards. To mitigate conflict and criticisms of the state board, Mingle (1988) suggested strategies to promote or dramatize effective state coordination. First, he suggested that there must be a clear and unambiguous designation of authority to the state boards to regulate institutions and set policy. This designation communicates a clear policy and observational hierarchy for the institutions and promotes a type of communication that favours the ascendant role of the state. Second, state boards should promote master planning and strategic planning efforts that include programs, budgets, enrollments, faculty workload, and facilities in order to fully align institutional behaviours and resources with state policy goals. Third, states should establish formulas or policies for the distribution of public funds that reinforces major state policy goals. Accordingly, these formulas and policies create the image of a “rational” basis for the distribution of funds according to institutional obligations and performance. Fourth, he argued that states should establish program approval policies that ensure that institutional decision-making is consistent with or constrained by state directives. Finally, he suggested that state boards should conduct statewide policy analysis targeted at current issues facing the state. As Mingle (1988) suggests,

policy analysis is one of the most constructive and valuable functions of the state board, for these reports and discussions serve to break down the barriers between sectors and focus attention on long-term issues that campuses may be avoiding. [8]

States face a multitude of economic, social, and demographic issues and are constantly making choices regarding the limited availability of resources. Higher education institutions now witness postsecondary education policy changes that require their reforms to develop solutions to address critical state issues. The subordination of individual, organizational, and institutional initiative and behaviour to state policy goals is now viewed as a major philosophic principle of higher education reform (Conklin 2001). The overarching policy goal of reform is to improve state postsecondary education systems as a means of advancing capitalist economic development.

An array of policy initiatives help operationalize this goal. Two reform initiatives are particularly helpful in illustrating the processes of surveillance and spectacle in postsecondary educational reform. During the past decade, governors, legislators, and state boards have focused their interests in reform on the measurement of institutional performance and the financing of higher education.

### Accountability and Performance Indicators

State-level higher education reform typically requires public universities and community colleges to become more “accountable” for obtaining state goals. Almost every state that has pursued significant reform has established state and institutional performance indicators to define and track this. In Kentucky, for instance, the state adopted 40 separate performance indicators that are intended to address “five key questions” that are themselves intended to define the state’s vision for the role of higher education (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2002). The “key questions” from the state’s perspective are:

1. Are more Kentuckians ready for Postsecondary Education?
2. Are more students enrolling?
3. Are more students advancing through the system?
4. Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?
5. Are Kentucky’s communities and economy benefiting?

The five key questions and the 40 separate indicators that measure them required the state’s public institutions of higher education to commit resources and planning efforts toward the attainment of goals identified by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education on each of these measures. The new reform legislation provided a mandate for the state’s public postsecondary institutions and required institutional support for the state initiatives which were largely defined and measured through the performance indicators designed to address the five key questions. Kentucky’s approach is not unique, as many states have adopted performance indicators as the primary

means to assess institutional performance (Burke and Associates 2002).

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education uses the key questions and their associate performance indicators in all of its planning activities and includes institutional and state performance in its various brochures and publications. They also appear on its web site (<http://cpe.ky.gov/planning>). Kentucky’s postsecondary reform effort was modelled on the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA), which was initiated in 1990 and includes many similar accountability and performance measures. The Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) is regarded by policymakers in the state as a successful approach to state-driven educational reform because of its use of quantitative measures of student, institutional, and state performance.<sup>1</sup> (It should be noted that bureaucratic outcomes-based accountability systems for K-12 schools—such as KERA and the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—receive wide spread support from politicians and policymakers at the state and federal levels, as well as many educators and researchers, but have also been severely criticized by a growing number of educational researchers. (See, for example, Gabbard and Ross 2008; Mathison and Ross 2008; Ross and Gibson 2007; Whitford and Jones 2000.)

The performance indicator or measure is a quantitative (and hegemonic) image that is intended to reflect and summarize the performance of an individual or organization on a specific variable. Epistemologically and organizationally, a performance indicator is the measurement strategy of an extreme form of managerial empiricism that has either eschewed the importance of understanding process in life, or that restricts free inquiry by prohibiting questions about the generation of the number and the social phenomenon it is intended to reflect.

The performance indicator is an effective blending of *surveillance* and *spectacle* that helps maintain

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1 The performance measures associated with CATS are available on the web site of the Kentucky Department of Education). <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/HomePageRepository/Proof+of+Progress/Commonwealth+Accountability+Testing+System+%28CATS%29+Results.htm>

hierarchy by promoting images that minimize conflict and celebrate hierarchical observation. As *surveillance*, the performance indicator enables the observer, or those at the apex of the observational hierarchy, to categorize, monitor, and direct the behaviour and behavioural outcomes of the many, or those at the bottom of the observational hierarchy. As *spectacle*, the performance indicator is a pliable tool that permits the few to dramatize to the many the legitimacy of state power by creating, defining, and promoting images of necessity, accountability, and responsiveness. It is an image that mediates the relationship between the state, higher education, and the public. It is a form of reification in that it collapses the noumenal and phenomenal worlds into a number, quantity, statistic, or chart that is ripped from its moorings in a human process of conceptualization, measurement, compromise, refinement, and representation.

Because it always entails the refinement of measurement through the elimination of context, the performance indicator can never be an adequate representation of the human life-world. The performance indicator is always a distortion of concrete social reality because it is anathema to both context and totality. But the purpose of the performance indicator is not to achieve a neutral or objective representation of social and educational process, but to reinforce the observational hierarchy and to align the behaviour of organizations with state priorities.

### **Categorical and Performance Funding**

A second major feature of postsecondary reform in the United States is the creation of trust funds or categorical funding programs that set aside and designate state funds for programs and initiatives specifically designed to address state policy priorities. Appropriations to these trust funds are typically made to the state higher education board, which is then responsible for establishing criteria and distributing the funds to the institutions for designated programs. Examples of these programs abound in higher education today and include performance and fiscal incentive funding programs. Categorical funds attempt to address specific policy goals such as improving the state's accumulation of research funds, improving teacher education, and aligning workforce

development with emerging labour force needs. In each case, however, the intent is to use state resources to realign institutional behaviours, resources, and priorities with state policy goals.

State financial strategies that target funds for specific uses enforce state policy by removing or reducing institutional discretion in the internal allocation of funds. Thus, policy struggles at the institution or indeterminacy in the use of state funds is mitigated or minimized; the state has already solved the issue of how the funds will be spent and ensures that its priorities are addressed through the levers of resource allocation and financial management. The use of targeted funding strategies also promotes organizational and individual discipline by ritualizing the power and authority of the state higher education board over the institution and its constituents. Constituents who participate in institutional governance processes are socialized to recognize the power and authority of the state to decide how resources will be used. The ability of individuals who work and study within colleges and universities to participate fully in the construction of material reality is diminished in favor of a division of labour that elevates the interests of the state and the business, political, and educational elites who influence it. The division of labour in resource allocation becomes viewed as a legitimate and attractive, if bothersome, regime of finance, particularly if institutional administrators are able to promote the notion that the institution's total funding has increased.

Trust funds and categorical funding programs established by states to restructure the financing of higher education are an effective blending of surveillance and spectacle. Since the trust funds by design are not deposited into the institution's general fund, but are controlled separately, the accounting and accountability requirements enable the state to observe dollar by dollar the extent to which institutional expenditures meet state policy expectations. Thus, institutional control functions, business practices, information technology, audits, and financial reporting evolve into mechanisms of surveillance to observe the behaviour and behavioural outcomes of the faculty, chairs, administrators, trustees, and staff who participate in the operational implementation

of targeted state funds. The observational hierarchy between the state and the institution, and within the institution, is operationalized by finance officers in the state board office, state auditors, the comptroller's office at the institution, accounting practices, and software that generates financial reports that flow upward from the academic department or center to the dean to the vice-president for administration to the president to the state higher education board to the state auditor. The financial reporting system becomes not only a mechanism for tracking money, it is a means of disciplining individuals by monitoring their behavioural conformity with state policy on programmatic priorities.

As *spectacle*, targeted financial strategies enable those who manage spectacular domination to convey, advertise, or dramatize their vision and resolve to subordinate institutional behaviour to state policy. In many states, the governor, legislature, and higher education board ceaselessly promote these programs as the financial panacea for higher education. The trust funds and categorical programs, it is claimed, have helped the institutions overcome fiscal deficits in their operating funds, while also providing the state and external constituents with the power to direct institutional practice and individual behaviour.

The spectacle of higher education reform dramatizes the power of the state over organizations and individuals through hegemonic images that include performance indicators and categorical funding programs. Reform is a ritual drama employing the technology of hierarchical communications to control images and structure thought to preempt criticism, challenge, and conflict. The trust funds and categorical financing programs mediate the relationships between and among the institutions, the state, and the elites who influence or shape state policy. They are reifications that help reinforce stratification systems and authoritarian ideologies that promote externally imposed discipline and the uncritical enforcement of state fiscal and programmatic policy through resource allocation and financial reporting. These programs are celebrations of the domination of social life and the educational process by capital and the state since they eliminate discretion at the institution and, thus, minimize autonomy and self-direction in governance and organization.

### Implications for Critical Scholarship

The research literature on the role and impact of the state in higher education in the United States is almost entirely uncritical of prevailing social relations and forms of knowledge. Research on the role and impact of the state on higher education has typically evolved into one of two prevailing forms. The first category includes literature that is oriented toward the solution of management problems at colleges and universities posed by the evolving relationship between the state and the campus (Hauptman 2001; Hines 1988; Paulsen and Smart 2001; Richardson et al. 1999). The second is literature that focuses on the nature and sources of state policy toward higher education (Alexander 2000; McGuinness 1999; Trow 1998). In recent years, this literature has focused on the dissatisfaction of business and governmental elites with the performance and priorities of colleges and universities and has promoted an agenda that aims at a transformation of higher education into a form more congenial to the interests of capital and the state. A much smaller body of literature presents a critique of the role of the state in higher education and expresses frustration with the financing of higher education and the intrusion of corporate interests into public policy for higher education (Berman 1998; Polster and Newson 1998).

With dynamics such as surveillance and spectacle, it is difficult to understand how traditional methodologies or research strategies can provide an adequate understanding of the role and impact of states in higher educational reform. It is also difficult to understand how traditional forms of knowing can provide a cultural and political critique of the extension of state power into the policy processes and daily operations of colleges and universities. The merging of surveillance and spectacle presents clear and unique obstacles for any sort of pedagogical or inquiry-based resistance, particularly since the two permeate everyday interactions and discourses. The implications of the fusion of surveillance and spectacle include both a resistance to them in higher education and a broader discourse and action regarding the role of the state in society. While the various studies of ideology and image presented by Bahktin (1981) and Barthes (1977) offer insights into the

important questions surrounding the relationships between image and society, the theoretical work of Foucault and Debord provide crucial starting points for challenging the legitimacy and power of hierarchical observation and artificially constructed social spectacles.

### Foucault on Power and Resistance

Foucault's work on resistance rests most importantly on his understanding "that power, with its mechanisms, is infinite" (2000:452), though not necessarily omniscient or omnipotent. He cautions against forms of resistance in which some individuals have the authority to distinguish between appropriate or proper revolutionary behaviours and strategies at the expense of others. He also recognizes that opponents, resisters, and revolutionaries must take into account not only those actions that are the most directly political, but also those that are forms of evasion or defense against power and surveillance. Reminiscent of Bakunin's (1971) critique of Marx, Foucault (1980) specifically warns against revolutionary strategies or political ideologies by which one regime charged with imposing discipline is replaced by another with the same coercive capacities.

For Foucault, however, power in all of its forms demands the strongest modes of resistance. "The rules that limit [power] can never be stringent enough; the universal principles for dispossessing it of all the occasions it seizes are never sufficiently rigorous. Against power one must always set inviolable laws and unrestricted rights" (Foucault 2000:453). While Foucault dismissed labels such as "anarchist" and "libertarian" (see Macey 1993), he subtly argues for the potential of an anarchic or profound "logic of revolt" in which the "whole species of rationality and the status of a whole regime of truth can be made open itself to interrogation" (Gordon 1980:258). This is a striking and fundamental argument for resistance aimed toward the entirety of disciplinary power. The implications for critical scholarship in higher education may include a number of tangible forms of political resistance, such as boycotting, refusal, and organizing for political action. The methodological challenge of a critical scholarship is to identify, express, and support the visions and ideas of individuals and groups

who oppose the hierarchical observation of surveillance in higher education, even though these may be forms of opposition that are localized, situational, and contingent (Foucault 1980, 2000).

### Debord on Spectacle and Resistance

Debord suggests a variety of techniques to challenge the society of the spectacle. Debord's approach to opposition and critical scholarship have not been extensively explored for their significance to critical scholarship, but they offer considerable potential to challenge the regime of spectacle in higher education reform (Vinson and Ross 2003). The first is the *dérive*, which literally means "drifting" or "the drift," but implies for Debord a "mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society; a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances" (Situationalist International 1981:45). Further,

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think; from the *dérive* point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. [Debord 1981b: 50]

For Debord, the *dérive* was developed in the context of urban geography and psychogeography referred to the study of the effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviours of individuals. For those who work and study within the spectacle of state-driven higher education reform, the *dérive* offers a counter-strategy to planning, management, and accountability strategies that reinforce state power. The *dérive* is a form of knowing and behaviour that is not dependent upon, but seeks liberation from, staged and spectacularized discourse on the priorities, problems, successes, and failures of the social organization of higher learning. It offers a method for observing, judging, and normalizing the structures and experiences of higher education that challenges policy and management strategies

designed to discipline students, faculty, and other constituents by enforcing priorities, values, and performance standards developed by political, economic, and educational elites. Assessment, planning, and accountability processes in higher education would fundamentally change if informed by the *dérive*. The hierarchical observation inherent in state-driven forms of assessment, planning, and accountability would be subverted in favour of more discursive, participatory, and liberatory processes of evaluation and decision making. The *dérive* situates processes of knowing, assessing, and valuing more directly in everyday human experiences. It challenges and is fundamentally at odds with reality construction that is staged and spectacularized for the purposes of control and manipulation.

The second concept developed by Debord is *détournement*, which literally means “diversion.” For Debord, *détournement* refers to the integration of present or past artistic production into a “superior construction of a milieu.”

In a more primitive sense, *détournement* within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method that testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres. [Situationalist International 1981:46.]

Jappe (1999) argues that the *détournement* is “a quotation, or more generally a re-use, that ‘adapts’ the original element to a new context” (59). He continues:

It is also a way a transcending the bourgeois cult of originality and the private ownership of thought. In some cases the products of bourgeois civilization, even the most insignificant ones, such as advertisements, may be employed in such a way as to modify their meaning; in other cases, the effect may be to reinforce the real meaning of an original element ... by changing its form. [59]

Debord suggested that *détournement* is the organization of a new, meaningful ensemble of artistic elements based on the reuse of existing elements. Taken together, *dérive* and *détournement* constitute a technology for creating a “reinvented world” of experiment and play that enables the discovery of a “world of permanent novelty” (Marcus 1989:168-170).

As techniques of resistance aimed toward the

enforcement of a regime of images presented as performance indicators and categorical funding programs, *dérive* and *détournement* would have significant meaning and importance. How can they be applied and what impact might they have?

### *Dérive* and Critical Scholarship

When applied to reform in higher education, the *dérive* demands first a re-understanding and reconstruction of the policy environment engendered by changes in observation-based technologies and the intrusion of state capitalist governance and exchange relations into the policy and management of higher education. *Dérive* requires “drifting” through the physical, intellectual, and policy environment that includes the internet. It requires a confrontation with an entirely new set of “psychogeographies.”

*Dérive* is a social act that might involve faculty and students collectively and critically “drifting” through the space of higher education as they are attracted and repelled, or as their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are stimulated. They would be free to enter or exit policy and managerial domains, both physical and virtual, to experience, disrupt, play, learn, and govern. They could enter, surf, and modify state databases, vision statements, and web sites that collect, control, and (re)present images pertinent to the future of colleges and universities. Conceivably, they could enter and exit classrooms, boardrooms and media offices where policy and hegemonic images are enacted. Scholarship on higher education reform would itself be transformed by focusing more on the *dérive* as a response to policy initiatives by the state and less on the uncritical promotion of the goals of reform through scholarship that merely describes and explains institutional adaptation.

### *Détournement* as Critical Scholarship

With respect to *détournement*, the implications for resistance and critical scholarship involve a re-use or re-adaptation of symbols or elements of communication to a new context so that the effect is to “reinforce the real meaning of an element ... by changing its form” (Jappe 1999:59). *Détournement* is a method that challenges dominant meanings of an image gleaned through a process of surveillance or a constellation

of images that constitute a social spectacle by juxtaposing a new combination of symbols that help to situate the image in a newer, broader social and historical context. For instance, imagine a newspaper headline that states: “State Council’s Assessments Show Colleges Failing to Achieve Goals.”

Imagine also that this headline is accompanied by a table that lists the names of institutions in one column and average scores on a survey of recent graduates about their experiences at the institution in another column. The hegemonic image presented in this familiar news headline with accompanying information may seem like an innocuous news story about institutional performance on this national survey of undergraduates that aims at assessing how institutions measure up to expectations for their performance as articulated by a state higher education board. But further imagine an expanded chart and story that includes information on response rates, validity and reliability measures, institutional funding deficits, income levels of students and their families, ethnicity, academic qualifications of entering freshmen, administrative costs, dollars reallocated from academics to athletics, costs driven by governmental reporting requirements, and costs of international junkets taken by institutional chief executive officers and trustees.

The initial news story presents an image of a responsible state board attempting to measure institutional performance so that, ostensibly, students, and the community are better served. However, in the context of surveillance and spectacle, the initial news story reflects the power of the state to gather information on individual and organizational behaviour and to spectacularize its efforts to subordinate behaviour within colleges and universities to state policy objectives. The revised news story that includes an expanded table and description of the broader context changes the meaning and significance of

the assessment of institutional performance by the state. Specifically, the expanded headline and story helps subvert the hegemonic image of the responsible and omniscient use of state power to assess and restructure institutional performance. Information pertaining to the methods of surveillance, the social characteristics of students, and other challenges faced by the organization, including those generated by the state, provide a modification of the image that is a better reflection of the complexity of the socio-historical context of higher education.

The core of *détournement* rests on the idea that the hegemonic image can be altered to fit the context or the context can be altered to fit the image. *Détournement* enables students, faculty, and researchers to confront and challenge the enforcement properties of state-level reform of higher education as image. Confrontation and challenge require access to the technologies that make enforcement possible and a critical understanding of hegemonic images generated through the merging of surveillance and spectacle. *Détournement* provides a relatively untapped mode of critical resistance that can be joined with *dérive* and Foucault’s oppositional stance on power to comprise an incomplete, but initial, critical scholarship and praxis to challenge the hegemonic images, the spectacle, of state reform of higher education.

The practices of *dérive* and *détournement* are not methodological absolutes but tentative steps toward subverting hegemonic images of reform and creating an oppositional scholarship on higher education reform. They provide a vision for the creation of time and space in order to challenge alienation, passivity, and conformity. The hegemonic images of postsecondary reform are only a part of a broader reality of social control, challenge, and change that is ultimately created by human beings in an ongoing and imperfect process of reality construction.

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