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Michael W. Apple, Wayne Au, and Luis Armando Gandin

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*Edited by*  
Michael W. Apple, Wayne Au, and  
Luis Armando Gandin

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## Mapping Critical Education

*Michael W. Apple, Wayne Au, & Luis Armando Gandin*

### Introduction

Critical pedagogy—and critical educational studies in general—broadly seeks to expose how relations of power and inequality, (social, cultural, economic), in their myriad forms combinations, and complexities, are manifest and are challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Giroux, 1997; McCarthy & Apple, 1988). However, this may actually be too general a statement, for the term “critical pedagogy” is very much like the concept of democracy. It is something of a sliding signifier (Foner, 1998) that has been used in multiple ways to describe multiple things. Indeed, at times critical pedagogy seems to have been used in such broad ways that it can mean almost anything from cooperative classrooms with somewhat more political content, to a more robust definition that involves a thorough-going reconstruction of what education is for, how it should be carried out, what we should teach, and who should be empowered to engage in it.

This more robust understanding—one in which the three of us are grounded—involves fundamental transformations of the underlying epistemological and ideological assumptions that are made about what counts as “official” or legitimate knowledge and who holds it (Apple, 1979/2004, 2000). It also is grounded in radical shifts in one’s social commitments. This involves a commitment toward social transformation and a break with the comforting illusions that the ways in which our societies and their educational apparatuses are organized currently can lead to social justice. In addition, a more robust understanding of critical pedagogy and critical education is based increasingly in a realization of the importance of multiple dynamics underpinning the relations of exploitation and domination in our societies. Issues surrounding the politics of redistribution (exploitative economic processes and dynamics) and the politics of recognition (cultural struggles against domination and struggles over identity), hence, need to be jointly considered (Fraser, 1997).

At the very root of these concerns is a simple principle. In order to understand and act on education in its complicated connections to the larger society, we must engage in the process of *repositioning*. That is, we must see the world through the eyes of the dispossessed and act against the ideological and institutional processes and forms that reproduce oppressive conditions (Apple, 1995). This repositioning concerns both political and cultural *practices* that embody the principles of critical education; but it also has generated a large body of critical scholarship and theory that has led to a fundamental restructuring of what the roles of research and of the researcher are (Smith, 1999; Weis & Fine, 2004). Let us say more about what this implies.

## The Tasks of Critical Educational Research and Action

In general, there are eight tasks in which critical analysis (and the critical analyst) in education must engage.

1. It must "bear witness to negativity." That is, one of its primary functions is to illuminate the ways in which educational policy and practice are connected to the relations of exploitation and domination—and to struggles against such relations—in the larger society.
2. In engaging in such critical analyses, it also must point to contradictions and to spaces of possible action. Thus, its aim is to critically examine current realities with a conceptual/political framework that emphasizes the spaces in which counter-hegemonic actions can, or do, carry on.
3. At times, this also requires a redefinition of what counts as "research." Here we mean acting as "secretaries" to those groups of people and social movements who are now engaged in challenging existing relations of unequal power or in what elsewhere has been called "non-reformist reforms." This is exactly the task that was taken on in the thick descriptions of critically democratic school practices in *Democratic Schools* (Apple & Beane, 2007) and in the critically supportive descriptions of the transformative reforms such as the Citizen School and participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil (see Gandin in this volume, Apple et al., 2003; Apple & Buras, 2006).
4. When Gramsci (1971) argued that one of the tasks of a truly counter-hegemonic education was not to throw out "elite knowledge" but to reconstruct its form and content so that it served genuinely progressive social needs, he provided a key to another role "organic intellectuals" might play (see also Apple, 1996; Gutstein, 2006). Thus, we should not be engaged in a process of what might be called "intellectual suicide." That is, there are serious intellectual (and pedagogic) skills in dealing with the histories and debates surrounding the epistemological, political, and educational issues involved in justifying what counts as important knowledge. These are not simple and inconsequential issues and the practical and intellectual/political skills of dealing with them have been well developed. However, they can atrophy if they are not used. We can give back these skills by employing them to assist communities in thinking about this, learning from them, and engaging in the mutually pedagogic dialogues that enable decisions to be made in terms of both the short-term and long-term interests of oppressed peoples.
5. In the process, critical work has the task of keeping traditions of radical work alive. In the face of organized attacks on the "collective memories" of difference and struggle, attacks that make it increasingly difficult to retain academic and social legitimacy for multiple critical approaches that have proven so valuable in countering dominant narratives and relations, it is absolutely crucial that these traditions be kept alive, renewed, and when necessary criticized for their conceptual, empirical, historical, and political silences or limitations. This involves being cautious of reductionism and essentialism and asks us to pay attention to what Fraser has called both the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition (Fraser, 1997). This includes not only keeping theoretical, empirical, historical, and political traditions alive but, very importantly, extending and (supportively) criticizing them. And it also involves keeping alive the dreams, utopian visions, and "non-reformist reforms" that are so much a part of these radical traditions (Apple, 1995; Jacoby, 2005; Teitelbaum, 1993).
6. Keeping traditions alive and also supportively criticizing them when they are not adequate to deal with current realities cannot be done unless we ask "For whom are we keeping them alive?" and "How and in what form are they to be made available?" All of the things we have mentioned above in this tentative taxonomy of tasks require the relearning or development and use of varied or new skills of working at many levels with multiple groups.

Thus, journalistic and media skills, academic and popular skills, and the ability to speak to very different audiences are increasingly crucial.

7. Critical educators must also *act* in concert with the progressive social movements their work supports or in movements against the rightist assumptions and policies they critically analyze. Thus, scholarship in critical education or critical pedagogy does imply becoming an "organic intellectual" in the Gramscian sense of that term (Gramsci, 1971). One must participate in and give one's expertise to movements surrounding struggles over a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition. It also implies learning from these social movements. This means that the role of the "unattached intelligentsia" (Mannheim, 1936), someone who "lives on the balcony" (Bakhtin, 1968), is not an appropriate model. As Bourdieu (2003, p. 11) reminds us, for example, our intellectual efforts are crucial, but they "cannot stand aside, neutral and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of the world is at stake."
8. Finally, participation also means using the privilege one has as a scholar/activist. That is, one needs to make use of one's privilege to open the spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the "professional" sites to which, being in a privileged position, you have access.

These eight tasks are demanding and no one person can engage equally well in all of them simultaneously. However, there is a long tradition of critical scholarship and critical cultural work along multiple dynamics that has sought to "bear witness to negativity" and to recapture the collective memory of pedagogic work that is genuinely counter-hegemonic. We shall examine the latter in the next section.

## The Political Roots of Critical Pedagogy

Before the term "critical pedagogy" was coined by critical intellectuals and activists in Latin America such as Paulo Freire, educators from various communities in the United States and many other nations took up projects that would certainly be considered educationally "critical" by today's standards. These early manifestations of critical education often challenged existing social relations and power structures, raising substantive critiques of race, class, and gender relations as well as offering radical alternatives to then-existing educational forms.

For instance, there exists a long-standing tradition in the African American community and Afro-Caribbean community (Jules, 1992; Lewis, 1993, 2000) regarding the aims and nature of their education. At least since the late 1800s, African American intellectuals and activists, for example, have engaged in struggles over the question of just what the education of Blacks in the United States and the Caribbean should consist of, particularly given the context of post-chattel slavery and current institutional racism in their countries (Lewis, 1993, 2000; Watkins, 1993). Models of popular education based on such cultural memories and forms provided powerful resources to counter the dominant colonizing narratives and methods (Livingston, 2003; see also Jules, 1992).

Another example of counter-hegemonic activity, this time focused on critical public school organizing around issues of race and class, can be found in the history of Harlem in New York City between 1935 and the early 1950s. At this time the Harlem Committee for Better Schools (HCBS), a coalition of parents associations, churches, and teacher and community groups came together to push for improved schools in Harlem, including free lunches, better working conditions for teachers, and better physical conditions of the schools themselves. The HCBS is notable for several reasons. One is that it was interracial. It originated largely with Jewish communists who were teaching in Harlem schools, and garnered community support through the establishment of parents associations and chapters of the Teachers Union, allowing them to

develop close ties with most of the African American schoolteachers in Harlem. Another reason to note the HCBS is that it represented educational reform, activism, and organizing across constituencies because it included teachers, members of the community, as well as political organizations (Naison, 1985). These are key characteristics of critical educational action at its best. Although there were clear ranges of opinions and perspectives within the African American communities, all represent different responses to what historian Woodson (1933/1990) called the "mis-education of the Negro" in the United States and signify substantial critical race critiques of public education. Similar mobilizations can be found in England and elsewhere and around multiple diasporic communities and can be found across other equally oppressive dynamics of differential power involving gender and class at that time, and more recently.

There has also been a long tradition of critical feminist critiques of, and action on, education in nations throughout the world. In the United States, as elsewhere, in the early 1900s several notable women took lead roles in organizing teachers—a predominantly female workforce (Apple, 1986)—for improved working conditions. These included Grace Strahan in New York City and Margaret Haley in Chicago. Others, like Kate Ames, who in 1908 challenged the Male Schoolmasters Association in California, fought against the imposition of patriarchy in school organizational and pay structures (Weiler, 1989). Indeed, these early teachers' unions' struggles in the United States, England, and elsewhere (Apple, 1986) became models for organizing that took account of class and gender together. The history of feminist mobilizations and cultural work is replete with examples of the use of popular cultural forms and content to challenge dominance. Although there were justifiable criticisms that critical pedagogical work of this type marginalized women of color, working class women, and "Third World" women (Copelman, 1996; Gomersall, 1997; Martin, 1999; Munro, 1998; Purvis, 1991), at times these critical efforts did cut across class lines.

The issue of class is crucial here. Class relations and struggles against them, thus, were not invisible in the history of critical education. In fact, they often constituted a prime focus. Early manifestations of critical education in the United States reached beyond power dynamics associated with the politics of race and gender, although at times these dynamics were also ignored, much to the later detriment of the movement. Even with these weaknesses, however, the attempts to build an education that actively sought to interrupt class dominance were pronounced across international borders. In England and Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the struggles over socialist educational policies and practices were powerfully visible (Rubinstein & Simon, 1969; Simon, 1965, 1977, 1991, 1972). Between 1909 and 1911 in the United States, over 100 Socialist school officials were elected to various school districts across the country, and between 1900 and 1920, Socialist activists established more than 100 English-speaking Sunday schools in 20 states, ranging in size from classes of 10 students to schools that enrolled more than 600 students (Teitelbaum, 1988, 1993).

The curricula of these schools emphasized that: (1) children should take pride in being working class; (2) workers are systematically subordinated and should find solidarity with other oppressed groups; (3) students should develop a sense of collectivism; (4) students learned about the connections of their immediate social conditions with the broader socioeconomic relations; (5) fundamental social change is absolutely necessary; and (6) the contemporary socioeconomic relations needed to be critically analyzed in light of commonsense understandings of the world (Teitelbaum, 1991). While these Socialist Sunday Schools were not part of the public school system, they represent a class-based, critical community response to public education in the United States at the time. These kinds of socialist responses are mirrored in England and Wales (see, e.g., Rubinstein & Simon, 1969; Simon, 1965, 1991, 1972) and have a powerful history as well in Latin America for example (see, e.g., Bulhões & Abreu, 1992; Caldart, 2003; C. A. Torres, 1990, 1997, 1995).

It is crucial to realize that this history of critical educational action has parallels in many other nations as well. Indeed, throughout almost every region of the world, there are powerful movements and examples of radical pedagogic efforts both within the formal educational sector as well as in community literacy programs, labor education, anti-racist and anti-colonial mobilizations, women's movements, and others (see, e.g., Van Vught, 1991). For example, in South Korea during the first half of the twentieth century, evening schools were established to counter the colonizing efforts of the Japanese occupiers. These counter-hegemonic practices have continued through the efforts of the Korean Teachers Union to build curricula and models of teaching that are based on critical democratic principles. These efforts have had to overcome years of government repression (Ko & Apple, 1999; Sung & Apple, 2003; see also Kang, this volume). Similar tendencies have recently been seen in Turkey, where the government attempted to declare the largest teachers' union illegal because of the union's commitment to both a more culturally responsive pedagogy and a critical position on neoliberal policies in education and the economy (Egitim Sen, 2004).

So far we have given a brief set of examples of the efforts by some subaltern groups to challenge dominance in education, efforts that became increasingly widespread even in the face of what were serious and, often, extremely repressive consequences. But as we mentioned earlier, critical education has not only involved overt political and cultural action, it has also both generated and been generated by a growing emphasis on research that both documents reproductive forces in schools and points to possible avenues to challenge such reproductive forces. Thus, the entire range of critical pedagogical movements and efforts has been complemented by the growth of multiple communities of scholarship that have sought both to bear witness to negativity and document spaces for counter-hegemonic work.

### Bearing Witness and Expanding Dynamics in Critical Education

The second half of the 1970s was a key period in the development of critical analyses of education, particularly those that addressed how macro-level social, cultural, and economic structures related to school organization and experience (Whitty, 1985). The central critical research focus of the time revolved around examining the relationship between schools and social and cultural reproduction. While the tradition of critically examining the content and processes of cultural reproduction was already underway in the new sociology of education in England (see, e.g., Young, 1971), in critical curriculum studies in the United States (Apple, 1971), and in the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in France, much of the debate over this relationship crystallized around Bowles and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America*. In their book, Bowles and Gintis asserted a macro-level correspondence principle between the machinations and needs of capitalist production with that of the production of economic class-based differences in and through education. Further still, this correspondence was a relatively mechanical process, as the structure and outcome of schools seemed to be completely determined by capitalist economics and the paid workplace alone in a largely unmediated way (Apple, 1988; McCarthy & Apple, 1988).

Even with its evident problems, Bowles and Gintis' work did two things. First, it helped establish the contemporary relevance of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and quasi-Marxist analyses of schools and education (Whitty, 1985). Second, it sparked a contentious debate, spurred a number of far-ranging critiques of economic determinist explanations of inequality in education, and moved critical researchers to go even further in their analyses of cultural and ideological reproduction in schooling as well (Apple, 1979/2004; Au, 2006; Cole, 1988). The net result for critical analysts was to continue moving beyond relatively simplistic versions of class-based analyses of schools. Analyses that broadened the class relations that were considered of crucial importance (see, e.g., Bernstein, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984) came to the forefront, as did more explicit attention

to issues of race and gender, and thus signaled the growing influence of British and French theories of the relationship among culture, social institutions, and education (see, e.g., Young, 1971; see also, Au & Apple, this volume, for a more detailed discussion).

At the same time, the mobilization and movements that came out of feminist and racialized populations rightly challenged the emphasis only on class in critical work, in both social and economic reproduction. The very notion of reproduction itself was dramatically challenged in the process (Giroux, 1983). Issues of contradiction and conflict within and between these dynamics became considerably more significant. Thus, for instance, McCarthy and Apple (1988) advocated a "nonsynchronous parallelist" framework for understanding issues of race, class, and gender; one that recognized the intense and contradictory interactions within and among various dynamics of exploitation and domination and one that asked critical educators to be less reductive in their assumptions. Taking the lead from work that was based in theories of relative autonomy, a more subtle set of positions developed. Hence, for example, it was argued that racial inequality could not solely be reduced to economic inequality (see also, Apple & Weis, 1983), a position that, while not yet fully developed, prefigures some of the immensely productive arguments of critical race theory (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). To further develop some of these claims, many critical scholars turned to the works of Antonio Gramsci (1971), Louis Althusser (1971), Stuart Hall (1980a), and Raymond Williams (1977), as well as to the scholars from the Frankfurt School (Giroux, 2003), in order to seek new theoretical directions that addressed the complexities that analyses such as Bowles and Gintis' (1976) lacked (Au, 2006; McCarthy & Apple, 1988; Morrow & Torres, 1995; Whitty, 1985; see also, Au & Apple, this volume).

Leaders from within the more structuralist parts of this movement in this regard argued that schools accomplish at least three, sometimes contradictory, goals: (1) they aid in the process of capitalist accumulation by contributing to the stratification of students; (2) they aid in the process of legitimization of ideologies of freedom, individualism, and meritocratic equality, regardless of race, class, or gender; (3) they operate as a site of the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge, skills, and culture (Apple & Weis, 1983). These three "functions" of schooling may at times work against each other. For instance, the ideology of free and equal, competing individuals (meritocracy) exists in direct contradiction to the significant amount of group inequality that exists in our schools and society. Regardless, such critical analyses attempt to grasp the conceptual-theoretical complexities necessary to understand how hierarchies of power operate in education.

Yet power was not unidirectional and soon an entire series of insightful analyses based on the relationship among lived culture, schooling, and the economy developed. Stimulated in part by Willis's (1977) classic book on youth cultures, class relations, and masculinity, *Learning to Labour*, and McRobbies' (1978) equally thoughtful insights into the ways in which gender and class dynamics interacted inside and outside of schools, major gains quickly (but perhaps not quickly enough) arose and continue to be made in understanding the ways in which popular cultural forms and practices are dialectically interconnected with classed, raced, and gendered/sexed practices and dynamics (Annot, 2004; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Willis, 1990). Like Willis, for example, these analyses pointed to contradictory spaces in people's lived experience where cultural work might be able to bring youth under more progressive leadership (Weis, 1990).

Without denying these emphases on lived culture, others sought to return to a more traditional Marxist position. They suggested that only in such a return, in combination with theories and political practices associated with figures such as, say, Che Guevara, could critical educational theories develop their potential to be truly critical (see, e.g., McLaren, 2000). Yet, even with the immense gains that have been made in Marxist and neo-Marxist understandings, and in research based on feminist and anti-racist theories, these traditions have come under serious scrutiny. Feminist poststructural approaches and powerful analyses based on critical race theory have made provocative interventions into the debates over all of this (Ladson-Billings & Tate,

1995; Luke & Gore, 1992). A focus on indeterminacy, on capillary power, on power as productive—not only reproductive, on identity and on its discursive "constitution" often based on Foucauldian insights (see, e.g., Youdell, 2006) has made critical pedagogy a terrain of rich debates and conflicts. But it also has given it a vitality that keeps it alive and growing.

The international nature of these issues has been made more visible by the growth of analyses based on postcolonial perspectives. Influenced by the work of such figures as Said (1978), Spivak (1987, 1999), Thiong'o (1986), and Homi Bhabha (1984), postcolonial theories have proven to be increasingly influential as critical educators attempt to come to grips with the globalization of neoliberal and neoconservative policies and with attempts to interrupt them (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001; Singh, Kell, & Pandian, 2002).

All of this is not to say that critiques of critical pedagogy are not warranted, or that critical pedagogy and the entire terrain of critical educational research and action itself have no need for growth. Feminists and critical race scholars have been among the many to struggle to make certain that critical pedagogy generally addresses racism, sexism, the realities of homophobia (Kumashiro, 2002) and other forms of power in education. For instance, Luke and Gore's (1992) very important edited volume, *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, offers a collection that challenges some of the foundations of critical pedagogy on the grounds that it has failed to "engage with feminism" (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 138) while, in many of the chapters, maintaining a view that is still supportive of the overall emancipatory goals of critical pedagogy. Similarly, Leonardo's (2005b) very thoughtful collection, *Critical Pedagogy and Race*, does much of the same work in regards to race, racism, and critical pedagogy. Here, Leonardo (2005a) finds that "the question of race has played a secondary role in the development of critical pedagogy," and that "Race has been interwoven into critical pedagogy but often in relation to a prioritized engagement with class struggle" (p. xii).

Our position is that, when guided by an urge to collectively build a "decentered unity" that tries to work across differences, all of these critiques of critical pedagogy—feminist, critical race, and ecological—as well as others (e.g., sexuality and ability, see Chang, 2005; Erevelles, 2005; Kumashiro, 2002) are valuable. They generally help the field evolve and strengthen it as a more viable means for making educational and social change (Au & Apple, 2007).

### Critical Education and Conservative Social Movements

Such vitality and the productive conflicts within critical pedagogy do not guarantee success, however. Let us be honest. Critical pedagogy and critical education as a whole—and the research that is dialectically connected to it—is a maturing and ongoing set of projects; projects that are unfinished. Both remain vitally necessary. Done well, they offer critical analyses that provide theorists and practitioners a means to intervene in ongoing, even increasing, social and educational inequalities. However, this dual set of projects is sometimes weakened by its tendency toward "romantic possibilitarianism" (Whitty, 1974), its lack of a sophisticated strategic sense of the power of social movements, and especially rightist social movements inside and outside of education in a considerable number of nations (Apple, 2006; Takayama & Apple, 2007). This is a crucial weakness, since the interventions associated with critical pedagogy are of even greater importance given the recent formation of extremely powerful rightist alliances in the United States, Japan, Australia, and so many other nations today.

As one of us (Apple, 2006) has argued, there exists an alliance of four major groups in the United States and in an increasing number of other nations in the world. These groups and the tactical alliance they have formed have varying degrees of power and effectiveness, depending on regional and national histories and the balance of forces in each local site. However, it has become ever clearer that the forces behind this alliance currently hold hegemonic power by creating connections between people's "good sense" and using such connections to disarticulate

social groups and individuals from their previous ideological and social commitments and rearticulate them to new ideological and social commitments. This is a very creative process, one examined by such scholars as Hall (1980b), Apple (1996, 2000, 2006), Apple and Buras (2006), Apple et al. (2003), J. S. Torres (2001) and a number of others.

In many nations this alliance—what has been called “conservative modernization” (Apple, 2006; Dale, 1989–90)—is made up of at least three, and sometimes four, social forces—neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populist religious conservatives (particularly powerful in the United States, Pakistan, India, Israel, and elsewhere), and the professional and managerial middle class. Neoliberals are generally guided by a vision of a weak state, students as human capital, and the world as a supermarket ripe for consumer (and producer) competition. In education, the neoliberal agenda manifests itself in closer linkages between schools and businesses as well as the implementation of “free market” reforms, such as school vouchers, into education policy. Neoconservatives, on the other hand, are usually guided by a vision of a strong state that asserts control over knowledge, culture, and the body. They seek a return to a romantic past where “real knowledge,” morality, and a supposedly stable social order existed. In education, neoconservatism manifests in national and state-wide testing and curricula, content standards, the heralding of the Western canon of knowledge, a relatively uncritical patriotism, and moral education (Apple, 2006; Buras & Apple, 2008).

Authoritarian populists are distinctly different from both neoliberals and neoconservatives. Their sensibility regarding social order comes directly from biblical authority and “Christian morality,” (although at times its authority may come from particular readings of the Koran or of, say, Hindu texts as in the Hindutva movement in India). Inerrantist interpretations of sacred texts provide guidelines for family structure and gender roles—and for what counts as legitimate knowledge and action in general. In education in the West, the authoritarian populist agenda manifests itself, for instance, in struggles over the exclusion of evolution and the inclusion of creationism and intelligent design in science classes and in the rapid growth of home schooling, a phenomenon now found in increasing numbers in countries such as Denmark, Norway, Germany, Australia, England, Israel, and elsewhere (Apple, 2006; Beck, in press).

The fourth part of this alliance is the professional and managerial new middle class. This class fraction uses its technical expertise in management and efficiency to support systems of accountability, assessment, production, and measurement required by neoliberal marketization and neoconservative control over knowledge (see Clarke & Newman, 1997 for further elaboration of its commitments). In education, this class fraction supports and benefits from, for instance, systems of high-stakes, standardized testing and educational policies built upon reductive forms of accountability as they provide the technical means to make these systems and policies operational. They engage in complicated conversion strategies in which particular kinds of capital (cultural capital) are converted into social and economic capital. It is often their specific cultural assemblage that also dominates educational policy (Apple, 2006; Au, 2008).

While each group of this alliance has its own internal dynamics and historical trajectories, together they have “creatively stitched together different social tendencies and commitments and has organized them under its own general leadership” (Apple, 2005, p. 272), and thus represent a “conservative modernization” of social, cultural, economic, and educational policy in multiple nations, including those with a supposedly social democratic or even socialist past (Apple, 2006; Apple et al., 2003).

### Progressive Social Movements and Education

A recognition of—and a bearing witness to—these worrisome conditions, especially in urban schools, is what grounds some of the recent work on *progressive* social movements, work that

acts as a counter-balance to critical analyses of conservative hegemonic alliances. For example, Jean Anyon’s (2005) recent book, *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education and a New Social Movement*, can provide a case in point. It describes and critiques the class and race structuring of schooling in the United States—and, in the process, ultimately offers possibilities for mobilizing around new social movements. It also succeeds in going well beyond the rhetorical flourishes we criticized earlier.<sup>1</sup> A key phrase in Anyon’s analysis is “a new social movement.” Anyon recognizes something others have argued at greater length elsewhere—that it is social movements that are the driving forces behind a good deal of social and educational transformation (Apple, 2000). In Apple’s work described above, much of the critical attention was devoted to the forces and movements behind current neoliberal and neoconservative policies involved in conservative modernization, for two reasons. First, whether we like it or not, these movements have been increasingly powerful in transforming our core ideas about democracy and citizenship. The social, economic, and educational effects of the policies that have come from the Right often have been strikingly negative, especially for those who have the least in our own and other societies (Apple, 2006; Apple et al., 2003; Apple & Buras, 2006), and one of the major effects has been to make it increasingly difficult to maintain the legitimacy of critical educational theories, policies, and practices.

Second, all three of us think that we have much to learn from the forces of the Right. They have shown that it is possible to build an alliance of disparate groups and, in the process, to engage in a vast social and pedagogic project of changing a society’s fundamental way of looking at rights and (in)justice. Radical policies that only a few years ago would have seemed outlandish and downright foolish are now accepted as commonsense. While we should not want to emulate their often cynical and manipulative politics, we still can learn a good deal from the Right about how movements for social change can be built across ideological differences. Capitalism (as well as the historical regimes surrounding race and gender, and the intersections and contradictions of these dynamics) plays a major part of the driving force behind these dynamics and movements, but saying that says very little about *why* people join Rightist mobilizations and movements and how they might be convinced to join more progressive ones.

Whereas Apple focused on critically understanding why the Right is winning and what we can learn from them, Anyon shifts the focus powerfully. She directs our attention to the historical and current progressive mobilizations that have made a difference in society. She sets about examining the specifics of such social movements, documenting why and how they pushed this society, sometimes against great odds, toward a greater commitment to social justice.

We concur with Anyon’s claim that schools can play crucial roles in raising critical questions about, and building movements to challenge, both the ways in which the economy now functions unequally and the ways in which, say, the politics of race operates in every one of our institutions. We are not romantic about these possibilities. But schools are sites of conflict. They embody not only defeats, but also victories in many countries. Thus, they are worth taking very seriously.

Anyon helps us here. In the process of telling the stories of different kinds of movements, Anyon also shows how, by participating in political actions, new activist identities are formed by dispossessed groups at the same time as very real progress is made culturally, educationally, politically, and economically (see Apple & Buras, 2006). But activist movements don’t just help to transform economic, political, cultural, and educational institutions and policies. They also have profound effects on other sympathetic organizations. Movements making what seem at the time to be utopian and radical demands historically have pushed more mainstream organizations along, creating a situation where they too must support fundamental changes in policies that are deeply discriminatory and harmful (Sewell, 2004).

Anyon is very honest about what is actually required to change schools. This is more than a little refreshing, since all too often we seem to be content with critical slogans, rather than examining what actually is possible and how we might bring these possibilities into existence

in the real world of schools and communities. Anyon highlights powerful coalitions involving anti-racist movements, class mobilizations, and the central place of women activists in these struggles as well (see also Apple & Buras, 2006). She places the politics of race and class at the center. By in essence taking leadership from, say, Black mobilizations, she is able to highlight the ways in which movements against the classed and raced economy, the racial and racializing state, and in the politics of daily life create new collective and more powerful political identities that can challenge hegemonic racisms and class realities.

### Can Critical Pedagogy Be Put Into Practice?

While it is crucial to "bear witness," to recognize and analyze the strength and the real consequences of neoliberal and neoconservative policies (Apple, 1996, 2000, 2006; Gandin, 1994, 1998, 1999), and to document the ways in which new social movements can grow and have grown to counter such conservative movements and tendencies, it is also essential to understand the renegotiations that are made at regional and municipal levels. As Ball (1994) emphasizes, "policy is . . . a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings" (p. 10). Thus, rather than assuming that neoliberal and neoconservative policies dictate exactly what occurs at the local level, we have to study the rearticulations that occur on this level to be able to map out the creation of alternatives. It is here that the critical research tradition(s), the role of the researcher as a "critical secretary," and the Freirean emphasis on the politics of interruption join.

Educators in a number of nations have had to cope with the major transformations of ideology, policy, and practice to which we have pointed in this chapter. For us, it is important to learn two things from the experiences of other educators who are struggling against the forces of inequality. First, we can learn about the actual effects of neoliberal and neoconservative policies and practices in education. Second, and even more important, we can learn how to interrupt neoliberal and neoconservative policies and practices and how to build more fully democratic educational alternatives (Apple, 2006; Apple & Buras, 2006).

One of the best examples of this can currently be found in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Gandin, 2006). The policies that were put in place by the Workers' Party, such as "participatory budgeting" and the "Citizen School," have helped to build support for more progressive and democratic policies there, in the face of the growing power of neoliberal movements at a national level. The Workers' Party was able to increase its majority, even among people who had previously voted in favor of parties with much more conservative educational and social programs, because it has been committed to enabling even the poorest of its citizens to participate in deliberations over the policies themselves and over where and how money should be spent. By paying attention to more substantive forms of collective participation and, just as importantly, by devoting resources to encourage such participation, Porto Alegre has demonstrated that it is possible to have a "thicker" democracy, even in times of both economic crisis and ideological attacks from neoliberal parties and from the conservative press. Programs such as the "Citizen School" and the sharing of real power with those who live in *favelas* (shantytowns), as well as with the working and middle classes, professionals, and others, provide ample evidence that thick democracy offers realistic alternatives to the eviscerated version of thin democracy found under neoliberalism (Gandin, this volume; Apple et al., 2003; Apple & Buras, 2006).

The Citizen School has been important not only as a way of giving an impoverished population a quality education that will enable them to have better chances in the paid labor market and at the same time operate as empowered citizens, but also because it has generated structured forms of "educating" the communities both for organizing around and discussing their

problems and for acting on their own behalf through the channels of participation and deliberation. In the process, it has "educated" the state agencies as well. The administrative, organizational, and curricular reforms—taken together—have helped to create the beginnings of a new reality for the excluded. They have forged new leadership, brought about the active engagement of the communities with the communities' own situations, and led to much more active participation in the construction of solutions to these problems (Gandin, 2006).

Once again, we do not wish to be romantic here. There are problems in Porto Alegre—political, economic, and educational (Gandin & Apple, 2003). However, in spite of this, we are optimistic about the lasting impact of its democratizing initiatives and its construction of a more diverse and inclusive education. By itself, the Citizen School has been very successful in including an entire population which, if it were not for this project, would be out of the schools and even further excluded in an already actively excluding society. But the larger educative aspect of the Citizen School—empowering impoverished communities where they are situated and transforming both the schools and what counts as "official knowledge" there—is also of significant moment. The transformations in Porto Alegre represent new alternatives in the creation of an active citizenry—one that learns from its own experiences and culture—not just for now, but also for future generations. For these very reasons, we believe that the experiences of Porto Alegre have considerable importance not only for Brazil, but also for all of us who are deeply concerned about the effects of the neoliberal and neoconservative restructuring of education and of the public sphere in general. There is much to learn from the successful struggles there. Understanding these struggles, documenting them, and actively supporting them can assist us all in our attempts to live out the tasks of critical educational analysis and action that we noted at the outset of this chapter.

### Tracing the Handbook of Critical Education

It is not possible for us to understand the limits and possibilities of critical educational work unless we have a deeply serious understanding of the economic, political, and ideological contexts in which such work would be done. The section on "Social Contexts and Social Structures" provides detailed critical analyses of the economic and social context and ideological struggles that surround education. The section includes a focus on global realities associated with neoliberalism and global capitalist forms, including the ways in which the dynamics of neoliberalism and neoconservatism structure educational reforms internationally and nationally. The chapters include interrogations of: the ways in which the World Bank and International Monetary Fund exert considerable power on educational reforms around the world (Robertson & Dale); the ways in which neoliberalism has provided the context of influential reforms, such as No Child Left Behind in the United States (McCarthy & colleagues); the impulses toward privatization and corporatization in controlling schools (Saltman); and the ongoing tensions of politics and neoliberalism over curricular content in Europe, and especially Spain (Torres Santomé).

Doing critical analyses of the way power works in education requires immense subtlety and a recognition of the multiplicity of power relations in any given context. The next section of the book, "Redistribution, Recognition, and Differential Power," brings together insightful analyses of what Nancy Fraser (1997) correctly called the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. Among the dynamics with which this section deals are such crucial areas as: the neo-Marxist study of inequality in education (Au & Apple); class relations and educational praxis (Scatamburlo-D'Annibale & McLaren); the contributions of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings); whiteness as the ever present fundament of educational policy and practice (Leonardo); the ways in which feminist poststructural approaches provide fundamental resources for engaging in analyses in education (McLeod); the central importance that sexuality and heteronormativity

occupy in schooling (Loutzenheiser & Moore); the dynamics of masculinity(ies) in schooling (Weaver-Hightower); the location of disability as a core concern in critical struggles in education (Slee); the key role of indigenous knowledge and identities in the centuries-long struggle over unequal power and education (Grande); and the ways in which new perspectives based on the work of Foucault can continue, but also question and add to, the critical tradition of examining the concepts of subject, power and discourse (Fischer).

Perhaps the most central figure internationally in the development of critical education was Paulo Freire. His influence remains a key element throughout the world. Because of this, we have devoted an entire section, "The Freirean Legacy," to the conceptual and political roots of the tradition that has evolved from his work, and to the ways in which this work has influenced critical educators in a number of areas. Chapters in this section include: a detailed analysis of the theoretical and political principles underlying Freire's critical pedagogy, as well as its development across different contexts (Au); a rereading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* showing its continued relevance to the demands of a truly radical education (Fischman); the immensely creative work of Augusto Boal and the role of Theatre of the Oppressed in mobilizations against domination in Brazil and elsewhere (Rosa); and how Freirean approaches have actually been institutionalized within critical education in the United States, particularly in the State of California (Wong).

The politics of critical education and the influence of the multiple traditions of critical education can be found in education at all levels. These traditions have also been influential in institutional transformation. The next section, "The Politics of Practice and the Recreation of Theory," contains insightful analyses of the influence of a truly critical approach to education in: building critical alternatives in adult education (Mayo); understanding and interrupting the role of media in radical democracy (Kellner & Share); restructuring teacher education in powerful, socially reflexive ways (Zeichner & Flessner); creating socialist counter-hegemonic institutions and processes historically (Teitelbaum); leading to creative pressures to transform national school systems (Flecha); basic transformations of entire school systems that have stood the tests of time and political turmoil in places such as Brazil (Gandin); their role as a site for the development of ongoing movements to interrupt neoliberalism and neoconservatism in Japan (Takayama); and their growing influence in places that have very strong central state authority over education in such nations as China (Yan & Chang).

Many of the most creative efforts and results of critical education can be found in social movements. In "Social Movements and Pedagogic Work," each of the chapters focuses on the connections between organized movements and the building of serious ideological and social transformations. These include the ways in which radical social movements have led to counter-hegemonic possibilities in education (Anyon); the place that politically committed teachers' unions have played in the ongoing battles over critically democratic schooling in many nations (Compton & Weiner) and in the case of South Korea where these struggles have been particularly intense (Kang); and the importance of popular social movements in the development of politicized forms of popular education in Latin America (Sandler).

Paralleling the influence of critical education on the development of theories, policies, and practices in educational and cultural struggles, has been a concomitant set of influences on the politics and processes of research. This influence is growing rapidly. The section on "Critical Research Methods for Critical Education" documents some of these gains by focusing on: the emerging methodological impulses underpinning some of the new forms of ethnographic research unfolding in the context of globalization (Weis, Fine, & Dimitriadis); the uses of new technologies such as Geographical Information Systems in tracking growing inequalities made worse by new forms of capitalism (Choi); the significance of quantitative methods to complement the more qualitative methods that have dominated critical research (Ferrare); and how comparative research must take account of the politics of Orientalism and postcolonial perspectives (Nozaki).

## Personal and Political Postscript

In the concluding section of this chapter, we want to be very honest. We are conscious of the fact that the immense gains that have been made in critical education over the past three decades have made the task of providing a complete picture of the critical education communities nearly impossible. We take this as an extremely positive symbol of the vibrancy of a set of traditions that is still in formation. Given the fact that these traditions are grounded in the eight tasks that we noted at the beginning of this introduction, one of the key foundations lies in the element of critique. A book such as this is one moment in the dialectical progression of these traditions of critique and of the affirmation of new realities and new struggles against oppressive conditions. And a book such as this needs also to affirm more emancipatory projects that have grown out of these critiques. Because of the very nature of this project and the political, empirical, conceptual, and practical fields of which it speaks, we view this volume as a "temporary" assessment that by its very nature will need to be built on, superseded, and itself subject to the kinds of critique that are so necessary if we are to participate in what one of us has called the "de-centered unities" that are so necessary in times of exploitation, domination, and the constant struggles against them both. Hence, all of the authors and editors included here welcome the ongoing dialogue that will inevitably grow from a volume of this sort.

Here are some of the tensions that we recognize in this collection. Historically there has been a very real problem of what has been called "commatization" (Gillborn, 2008) in mapping oppressive relations (e.g., class, gender, race, sexuality, ability, . . .). At the same time that we realize the immense dangers of this additive model, we also realize that it leads to ignoring the problem of intersectionality (Gillborn, 2008). As an example, class occurs in raced and gendered/sexed bodies. No one volume could fully solve dilemmas such as these nor could it deal respectfully with the growing number of relations of dominance and exploitation. Thus there are silences over crucial dynamics that, given space and resource limitations, could not be included.

The map that we have provided in this chapter, like the book as a whole, is a temporary one. It is a first step that clearly requires continued political mapping, and these maps must be constantly redrawn. Even before Foucault's important work entered into the field of education, many people realized that the categories that are employed to map the world both signify and create power/knowledge nexuses (see Apple, 1979/2004). But problems of categorization and the power/knowledge relations that they establish are but one of the issues we have faced. While we have striven to have analyses from many parts of the world, this is a book written in English. The politics of language are real politics. Inevitably a book such as this, no matter how large, partly centers dominant voices even in its attempt to be conscious of that centering (see Takayama, this volume). Given the geopolitics of publishing and academic writing (Canagarajah, 2002), and the role of English as an imperial project, right now we can but note this as part of a constitutive dilemma.

In addition, there are other "linguistic" issues that must be faced. In some ways we have treated critical education as if it was a noun, something that can be known, even if temporarily; yet as all of the people involved in this book fully understand, critical education is better thought of as a verb. It demands multiple kinds of action, personal and social repositioning, and a constant willingness to take risks. This is a crucial point. As Mike Davis (2006) reminds us in his devastating portrait of the ways in which people live ("exist" is a much better word) under the worst conditions of global capitalism, even words that we take for granted such as "food" and "shelter" are all too easily reified and thought about as nouns. But for millions of people all over the world, it would be the height of luxury to even consider these "words" as nouns. One's daily life is conditioned by the constant labor to provide food, to find shelter. Progressive social movements have formed in nations throughout the world to mobilize around the labor of "food" and



"shelter." Davis's insight needs to be taken to heart by all of us involved in critical education. Only then can we have a more fully relational understanding of what it means to actually reposition oneself.

Paulo Freire reminded us consistently that any critical education worthy of its name must begin and end in honest dialogue. In recognition of the dilemmas we have noted above, and to stimulate the kind of ongoing dialogue that is an essential core of critical education in all its forms, we wish to give you our e-mail addresses: Michael Apple <apple@education.wisc.edu>; Wayne Au <wau@exchange.fullerton.edu>; Luis Armando Gandin <Luis.Gandin@ufpr.br>.

We welcome, indeed we ask for, responses, affirmations, suggestions, criticisms, as part of our commitment to keep critical education in constant motion. Just as dominant visions and ideologies of education attempt to cement in place only those forms and processes that are hegemonic, our task, the task of counter-hegemony, is not to replace one reified object with another. Critical education is a collective project, one that is absolutely vital to building and defending an education worthy of its name. We dedicate this volume to those thousands and thousands of people throughout the world who not only keep an education worthy of its name alive, but who continue to teach all of us what is possible even in conditions that can often lead to cynicism. A famous political theorist and activist once reminded us that people make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. We may not be able to control all of the conditions of our work but, above all, let us continue to make our own history.

## Note

- 1 We need to openly state that a few of the books mentioned in this essay, particularly the books by Anyon and Weis, are in a series that one of us (Apple) edits. But since the task we were asked to take on in this essay was to give a sense of the state of critical work in the United States and elsewhere, and these books are important statements about this, we felt that to exclude them would have led to a major silence in such an account.

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