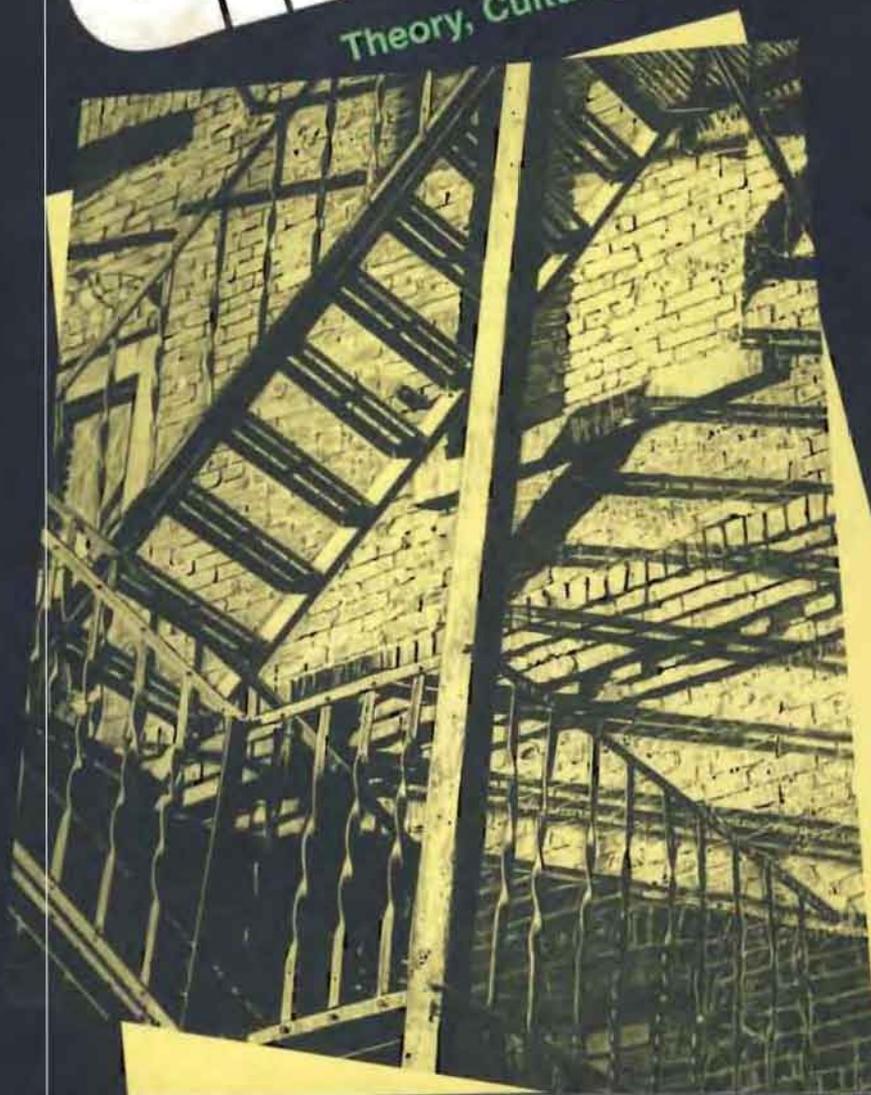


# Henry A. Giroux

Pedagogy  
and  
the Politics  
of Hope

Theory, Culture, and Schooling



THE EDGE: CRITICAL STUDIES IN  
EDUCATIONAL THEORY

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Shirley R. Steinberg

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(A Critical Reader)

Henry A. Giroux

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**Pedagogy and  
the Politics of  
Hope**

*Theory, Culture,  
and Schooling*

A Critical Reader

Henry A. Giroux

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*For the children*

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## Series Editors' Foreword

As editors of Westview's series *The Edge: Critical Studies in Educational Theory*, we asked Henry Giroux to put together a series of his most definitive essays from the past fifteen years so that education and cultural studies scholars could gain a sense of the roots and progression of his work. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* is the product of that request. Giroux's work is so prodigious and multidimensional that the effort to select a manageable but comprehensive sampling of it became a frustrating chore: "How can we leave out the essay on the Frankfurt School?" or "I don't understand why the essay on the critique of reproduction theory was deleted" became common questions and observations in our deliberations. To do justice to the variety of discourses that Giroux has drawn upon or the various theoretical advances he has offered in his relatively short career would require a Quintilianesque multivolume set. We yielded to the demands of practicality; *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* is the result of our conferences. We hope that readers will find the work included here as compelling and insightful as we do. As this volume illustrates, Giroux is undoubtedly one of the most creative educational thinkers of the last third of the twentieth century, and his innovative scholarship and influence will continue into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Giroux's passion and genius revolve around the struggle for a radical democracy both in the United States and in the world at large. *Radical democracy*, as he uses the term, involves the effort to expand the possibility for social justice, freedom, and egalitarian social relations in the educational, economic, political, and cultural domains that locate men, women, and children in everyday life. Thus, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* documents the development of Giroux's trademark language of critique and possibility and the ways he deploys it in the effort to expose the forces that undermine education for a critical democracy. In the context of recent U.S. history such forces have flourished in the cocoon of Reaganism; indeed, it is in this environment that Giroux's insurgent analyses take shape. In the Age of Reagan, Giroux's introduction of Frankfurt School critical theory into the discourse of educational scholarship struck a responsive chord with those offended by duplicitous right-wing proclamations of an oppression-cleansed history of Ameri-

Thompson, E. P. *The making of the English working class*. New York: Vintage Press, 1966.

Volosinov, V. V. *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. New York: Seminar Press, 1973.

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## 4

### *Authority, Intellectuals, and the Politics of Practical Learning*

WE LIVE AT A TIME WHEN DEMOCRACY is in retreat. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the current debate surrounding the relationship between schooling and authority. As is the case with most public issues in the age of Reagan, the new conservatives have seized the initiative and argued that the current crisis in public education is due to the loss of authority. In this discourse, the call for a reconstituted authority along conservative lines is coupled with the charge that the crisis in schooling is in part due to a crisis in the wider culture, which is presented as a "spiritual-moral" crisis. The problem is clearly articulated by Diane Ravitch, who argues that this pervasive "loss of authority" stems from confused ideas, irresolute standards, and cultural relativism.<sup>1</sup> As a form of legitimation, this view of authority appeals to an established cultural tradition, whose practices and values appear beyond criticism. Authority, in this case, represents an idealized version of the American Dream reminiscent of nineteenth-century dominant culture in which the tradition becomes synonymous with hard work, industrial discipline, and cheerful obedience. It is a short leap between this view of the past and the new conservative vision of schools as crucibles in which to forge industrial soldiers fueled by the imperatives of excellence, competition, and down-home character. In effect, for the new conservatives, learning approximates a practice mediated by strong teacher authority and a student willingness to learn the basics, adjust to the imperatives of the social and economic order, and exhibit what Edward A. Wynne calls the traditional moral aims of "promptness, truthfulness, courtesy, and obedience."<sup>2</sup>

What is most striking about the new conservative discourse on schooling is its refusal to link the issue of authority to the rhetoric of freedom and democracy. In other words, what is missing from this perspective as well as from more critical perspectives is any attempt to reinvent a view of self-constituted authority that expresses a democratic conception of collective life, one that is embodied in an ethic of solidarity, social transformation, and an imaginative vision of citizenship.<sup>3</sup> I be-

lieve that the established view of authority tells us very little about what is wrong with schools. But it does point to the absolute necessity for critical educators to fashion an alternative and emancipatory view of authority as a central element in a critical theory of schooling. Agnes Heller states the problem well when she argues that "it is not the rejection of all authorities that is at issue here, but the quality of authority and the procedure in which authority is established, observed and tested."<sup>4</sup> Heller's remarks suggest a dual problem that critical educators will have to face. First, they will need a reconstructed language of critique in order to challenge the current conservative offensive in education. Second, they will need to construct a language of possibility that provides the theoretical scaffolding for a politics of practical learning. In both cases, the starting point for such a challenge centers around the imperative to develop a dialectical view of authority and its relationship to public education. Such a view of authority must both serve as a referent for critique and provide a programmatic vision for pedagogical and social change.

Nyberg and Farber point to the importance of making the concept of authority a central concern for educators by suggesting that "this question of how one shall stand in relation to authority is the foundation of educated citizenship: Its importance cannot be overemphasized."<sup>5</sup> I want to develop this position by arguing that if all educators have either an implicit or an explicit vision of who people should be and how they should act within the context of a human community, then the basis of authority through which they structure classroom life is ultimately rooted in questions of ethics and power. Central to my concern is developing a view of authority that defines schools as part of an ongoing movement and struggle for democracy, and teachers as intellectuals who both introduce students to and legitimate a particular way of life. In both instances, I want to fashion a view of authority that legitimates schools as democratic, counterpublic spheres and teachers as transformative intellectuals who work toward a realization regarding their views of community, social justice, empowerment, and transformation. In short, I want to broaden the definition of authority to include educational practices that link democracy, teaching, and practical learning. The substantive nature of this task takes as its starting point the ethical intent of initiating students into a discourse and a set of pedagogical practices that advances the role of democracy within the schools while simultaneously addressing those instances of suffering and inequality that structure the daily lives of millions of people both in the United States and in other parts of the world.

In developing my argument, I will focus on four considerations. First, I will review briefly some major traditional views surrounding the relationship between authority and schooling. This will be followed by a ra-

tionale for giving the concept of authority a central role in educational theory and practice. Here I will argue for an emancipatory view of authority, one that provides the ontological grounding for a critical form of teacher work and practice. Next I will present the broad theoretical outlines of a transformative pedagogy that is consistent with an emancipatory view of authority; finally, I will argue that the notion of authority has to be considered within a wider set of economic, political, and social practices in order for teachers to step out of their academic boundaries and enter into alliances with other progressive groups. It is crucial that this emancipatory view of authority become a part of an ongoing social movement whose purpose is to analyze and sustain the struggle for critical forms of education and democracy.

### The Discourses of Authority and Schooling

The concept of authority can best be understood as a historical construction shaped by diverse traditions that contain their own values and views of the world. In other words, the concept of authority like any other social category of importance has no universal meaning just waiting to be discovered. As a subject of intense battles and conflicts among competing theoretical perspectives, its meaning has often shifted depending on the theoretical context in which it has been employed. Given these shifting meanings and associations, it becomes necessary in any attempt to redefine the centrality of authority for a critical pedagogy to interrogate the way in which the concept has been treated by preceding ideological traditions. Ideally, such an analysis should take into account the status of the truth claims that particular views of authority reflect as well as the institutional mechanisms that legitimate and sustain their particular version of reality. Only then does it become possible to analyze authority within such diverse ideological traditions for the purpose of revealing both the interests they embody and the cluster of power relations they support. While it is impossible within this article to provide a detailed analysis of the various ways in which authority has been developed within competing educational traditions, I want to highlight some of the more important theoretical considerations inherent in conservative, liberal, and radical analyses. For it is against this general set of criticisms that an argument for the primacy of authority in educational discourse can be situated.

In the new conservative discourse, authority is given a positive meaning and is often related to issues that resonate with popular experience. As an ideal that often embodies reactionary interests, this position legitimates a view of culture, pedagogy, and politics that focuses on traditional values and norms. Authority in this view presents a rich mix of

resonant themes in which the notions of family, nation, duty, self-reliance, and standards often add up to a warmed-over dish of Parsonian consensus and cultural reproduction. In educational terms, school knowledge is reduced to an unproblematic selection from the dominant traditions of "Western" culture. Rather than viewing culture as a terrain of competing knowledge and practice, conservatives frame "culture" within the axis of historical certainty and present it as a storehouse of treasured goods constituted as canon and ready to be passed "down" to deserving students.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, pedagogy in this instance is often reduced to the process of transmitting a given body of knowledge with student learning squarely situated in "mastering" the "basics" and appropriate standards of behavior.

If the new conservatives view authority as a positive and inherently traditional set of values and practices, leftist educators almost without exception have taken the opposite position. In this view, authority is frequently associated with an unprincipled authoritarianism while freedom is something that is defined as an escape from authority in general. Authority within this perspective is generally seen as synonymous with the logic of domination. This position has been endlessly repeated in radical critiques in which schools are often portrayed as factories, prisons, or warehouses for the oppressed. While there is a strong element of truth in the notion that schools contribute to the reproduction of the status quo, with all of its characteristic inequalities, it is nevertheless inaccurate to argue that schools are merely agencies of domination and reproduction. Missing from this discourse is any understanding of how authority might be used in the interests of an emancipatory pedagogy. The agony of this position is that it has prevented radical educators from appropriating a view of authority that provides the basis for a programmatic discourse within schools. One consequence of this position is that the Left is bereft of a view of authority that allows for the development of a theoretical strategy through which popular forces might wage a political struggle within schools in order to accumulate power and to shape school policy in their own interests. The irony of this position is that the Left's politics of skepticism translates into an anti-utopian, overburdened discourse that undermines the possibility of any type of programmatic political action.<sup>7</sup>

Liberal theorists in education have provided the most dialectical view of the relationship between authority and education. This tradition is exemplified by Kenneth D. Benne, who has not only argued for a dialectical view of authority, but has also attempted to display its relevance for a critical pedagogy. Benne first defines authority as "a function of concrete human situations in which a person or group, fulfilling some purpose, project, or need, requires guidance or direction from a source out-

side himself or itself. . . . Any such operating relationship—a triadic relationship between subject(s), bearer(s), and field(s)—is an authority relationship."<sup>8</sup> He elaborates on this general definition by insisting that the basis for specific forms of authority can be respectively found in separate appeals to the logic of rules, the knowledgeability of expertise, and the ethics of democratic community. Benne then makes a strong case for grounding educational authority in the ethical practices of a community that takes democracy seriously. He simultaneously points out the strengths and weaknesses of forms of authority based on either rules or expertise, and rightly argues that the highest forms of authority are rooted in the morality of democratic community. Benne's article is important not only because it provides a working definition of authority but also because it points to ways in which the latter can be useful in developing a more humane and critical pedagogy. At the same time, it illustrates some weaknesses endemic to liberal theory that need to be overcome if the concept of authority is to be reconstructed in the interests of an emancipatory pedagogy.

First, while Benne makes an appeal to the ethics and imperatives of a democratic community, he exhibits an inadequate understanding of how power is asymmetrically distributed within and between different communities. Because of his failure to explore this issue, he is unable to illuminate how the material and ideological grounding of domination works against the notion of authentic community through forms of authority that actively produce and sustain relations of oppression and suffering. In other words, Benne posits a formal dialectical theory of authority that, in the final instance, remains removed from the lived social practices of students. As a consequence, we get no sense of how authority functions as a specific practice within schools shaped by the historical realities of social class, race, gender, and other powerful socioeconomic forces that sometimes prevent authentic forms of authority from emerging within public education. Simply put, Benne's analysis reproduces the shortcomings of liberal theory in general; that is, he unduly emphasizes the positive aspects of authority and in doing so ends up ignoring those "messy webs" of social relations that embody forms of struggle and contestation. By refusing to acknowledge relations of domination and resistance, Benne presents a view of authority that appears abstract and disconnected from the struggles that define schools in their particular historical locations and specificity. We are left with a notion of authority trapped in the reified realm of abstract formalities.

Second, Benne provides us with little understanding of how educational authority can be linked to the collective struggles of teachers both within and outside of schools. His attempt to link authority to the notion of community neither informs us as to how teachers should organize in

the interests of such a community, nor provides any referents for indicating what particular kinds of community and forms of subjectivity are worth fighting for.

In the end what most conservative, radical, and liberal educational discourses manage to establish are either reactionary or incomplete approaches to developing a dialectical view of authority and schooling. Conservatives celebrate authority, linking it to popular expressions of everyday life, but in doing so they express and support reactionary and undemocratic interests. On the other hand, radical educators tend to equate authority with forms of domination or the loss of freedom and consequently fail to develop a conceptual category for constructing a programmatic language of hope and struggle. To their credit, they do manage to provide a language of critique that investigates in concrete terms how school authority promotes specific forms of oppression. Liberals, in general, provide the most dialectical view of authority but fail to apply it in a concrete way so as to interrogate the dynamics of domination and freedom as they are expressed within the asymmetrical relations of power and privilege that characterize various aspects of school life.

It is at this point that I want to move to a more programmatic discourse on authority. In doing so, I want to appropriate the most progressive elements in a theory of authority from the political traditions I have discussed above. At the same time, I want to construct a rationale and new problematic for making an emancipatory view of authority a central category in the development of a critical theory of schooling.

### **Authority and Schooling: A Rationale**

It is important for educators to develop a dialectical view of authority for a number of reasons. First, the issue of authority serves as both the referent and the ideal for public schooling. That is, as a form of legitimation and practice necessary to the ongoing ideological and material production and renewal of society, the concept of authority provokes educators to take a critically pragmatic stance regarding the purpose and function that schooling is to play in any given society. As a form of legitimation, authority is inextricably related to a particular vision of what schools should be as part of a wider community and society. In other words, authority makes both visible and problematic the presuppositions that give meaning to the officially sanctioned discourses and values that legitimate what Foucault has called particular "material, historical conditions of possibility [along with] their governing systems of order, appropriation, and exclusion."<sup>9</sup>

Second, the concept of authority raises issues about the ethical and political basis of schooling. That is, it calls into serious question the role

that school administrators and teachers play as intellectuals in both elaborating and implementing their particular views of rationality; in other words, such a concept defines what *school* authority means as a particular set of ideas and practice within a historically defined context. In short, the category of authority reinserts into the language of schooling the primacy of the political. It does so by highlighting the social and political function that educators serve in elaborating and enforcing a particular view of school authority.

Third, the concept of authority provides the theoretical leverage to analyze the relationship between domination and power by both raising and analyzing the difference between the shared meanings that teachers elaborate in order to justify their view of authority and the effects of their actions at the level of actualized pedagogical practice. In this case, authority provides both the referent and the critique against which to analyze the difference between the legitimating claims for a particular form of authority and the way such a claim is actually expressed in daily classroom life.

Educational theorists such as Nyberg and Farber, Tozer, and others have rightly argued that the relationship between authority and democracy needs to be made clear if schools are to play a fundamental role in advancing the discourse of freedom and critical citizenship.<sup>10</sup> In what follows, I want to advance and expand the logic of this argument within the parameters of the rationale I presented above, but in doing so, I am going to move from a rather general interrogation of the value of authority to a more specific and committed plea. In other words, I will argue that the concept of authority is fundamental for developing a radical theory of schooling and for contributing to what I call the education of teachers as transformative intellectuals and the development of schools as democratic public spheres.

If the concept of authority is to provide a legitimating basis for rethinking the purpose and meaning of public education and radical pedagogy, it must be rooted in a view of community life in which the moral quality of everyday existence is linked to the essence of democracy.<sup>11</sup> Authority in this view becomes a mediating referent for the ideal of democracy and its expression as a set of educational practices designed to empower students to be critical and active citizens. That is, the purpose of schooling now becomes fashioned around two central questions: What kind of society do educators want to live in and what kind of teachers and pedagogy can be both informed and legitimated by a view of authority that takes democracy and citizenship seriously? Such a view of authority points to a theory of democracy that includes the principles of representative democracy, workers' democracy, and civil and human rights. It is, in Benjamin Barber's terms, a view of authority rooted in

"strong democracy," and is characterized by a citizenry capable of genuine public thinking, political judgment, and social action.<sup>12</sup> Such a view of authority endorses a concept of the citizen not as a simple bearer of abstract rights, privileges, and immunities but rather as a member of any one of a diverse number of public spheres that provide a sense of communal vision and civic courage. Sheldon Wolin is worth quoting at length on this issue:

A political being is not to be defined as . . . an abstract, disconnected bearer of rights, privileges, and immunities, but as a person whose existence is located in a particular place and draws its sustenance from a circumscribed set of relationships: family, friends, church, neighborhood, workplace, community, town, city. These relationships are the sources from which political beings draw power—symbolic, material, and psychological—and that enable them to act together. For true political power involves not only acting so as to effect decisive changes; it also means the capacity to receive power, to be acted upon, to change, and be changed. From a democratic perspective, power is not simply force that is generated; it is experience, sensibility, wisdom, even melancholy, distilled from the diverse relations and circles we move within.<sup>13</sup>

The notion of authority is important, in Wolin's case, because it connects the purpose of schooling to the imperatives of a critical democracy and provides a basis from which to argue for schools as democratic public spheres. That is, schools can now be understood and constructed within a model of authority that legitimates them as places where students learn and collectively struggle for the economic, political, and social preconditions that make individual freedom and social empowerment possible. Within this emancipatory model of authority, a discourse can be fashioned in which educators can struggle against the exercise of authority often used by conservatives to link the purpose of schooling to a truncated view of patriotism and patriarchy that functions as a veil for a suffocating chauvinism. In its emancipatory model, authority exists as a terrain of struggle and as such reveals the dialectical nature of its interests and possibilities; moreover, it provides the basis for viewing schools as democratic public spheres within an ongoing wider movement and struggle for democracy. For radical educators and others working in oppositional social movements, the dominant meaning of authority must be redefined to include the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the more specific concept of emancipatory authority needs to be seen as the central category around which to construct a rationale for defining teachers as transformative intellectuals and teacher work as a form of intellectual practice

related to the issues, problems, concerns, and experiences of everyday life.

It is important here to stress the dual nature of the emancipatory model of authority I have been presenting. On the one hand, this model provides the basis for linking the purpose of schooling to the imperatives of a critical democracy, a position I have already discussed. On the other hand, it establishes theoretical support for analyzing teaching as a form of intellectual practice; moreover, it provides the ontological grounding for teachers who are willing to assume the role of transformative intellectuals.

The concept of emancipatory authority suggests that teachers are bearers of critical knowledge, rules, and values through which they consciously articulate and problematize their relationship to each other, to students, to subject matter, and to the wider community. Such a view of authority challenges the dominant view of teachers as technicians or public servants, whose role is primarily to implement rather than conceptualize pedagogical practice. The category of emancipatory authority dignifies teacher work by viewing it as a form of intellectual practice. Within this discourse, teacher work is viewed as a form of intellectual labor that interrelates conception and practice, thinking and doing, and producing and implementing as integrated activities that give teaching its dialectical meaning. The concept of teacher as intellectual carries with it the imperative to judge, critique, and reject those approaches to authority that reinforce a technical and social division of labor that silences and disempowers both teachers and students. In other words, emancipatory authority establishes as a central principle the need for teachers and others to critically engage the ideological and practical conditions that allow them to mediate, legitimate, and function in their capacity as authority-minded intellectuals.

Emancipatory authority also provides the theoretical scaffolding for educators to define themselves not simply as intellectuals, but in a more committed fashion as transformative intellectuals. This means that such educators are not merely concerned with forms of empowerment that promote individual achievement and traditional forms of academic success. Instead, they are also concerned in their teaching with linking empowerment—the ability to think and act critically—to the concept of social transformation. That is, teaching for social transformation means educating students to take risks and to struggle within ongoing relations of power in order to be able to alter the grounds on which life is lived. Acting as a transformative intellectual means helping students acquire critical knowledge about basic societal structures, such as the economy, the state, the work place, and mass culture, so that such institutions can

be open to potential transformation. Doug White, the Australian educator, is instructive on this issue:

In the broadest sense it is education—the bringing of knowledge into social life—which is central to a project which can turn possibilities into actualities. Radical teachers have not made a mistake in being too radical, but in not being radical enough. The task is for teachers, with others, to begin a project in which the forms of social institutions and work are considered and transformed, so that the notion of culture may come to include the development of social structures. The true nature of curriculum . . . is the development of that knowledge, thought and practice which is required by young people to enable them to take part in the production and reproduction of social life and to come to know the character of these processes.<sup>15</sup>

As transformative intellectuals, teachers need to make clear the nature of the appeals to authority they are using to legitimate their pedagogical practices. In other words, radical educators need to make clear the political and moral referents for the authority they assume in teaching particular forms of knowledge, taking a stand against forms of oppression, and treating students as if they ought also to be concerned about the issues of social justice and political action. In my view, the most important referent for this particular view of authority rests in a commitment to a form of solidarity that addresses the many instances of suffering that are a growing and threatening part of everyday life in America and abroad. Solidarity in this instance embodies a particular kind of commitment and practice. As a commitment, it suggests, as Sharon Welch has pointed out, a recognition of and identification with “the perspective of those people and groups who are marginal and exploited.”<sup>16</sup> As a form of practice, solidarity represents a break from the bonds of isolated individuality and the need to engage for and with oppressed groups in political struggles that challenge the existing order of society as being institutionally repressive and unjust. This notion of solidarity emerges from an affirmative view of liberation that underscores the necessity of working collectively alongside the oppressed. It is also rooted in an acknowledgement that “truth” is an outcome of particular power struggles that cannot be abstracted from either history or existing networks of social and political control. This position suggests that one’s beliefs are always subject to a critical analysis and that the process of learning how to learn is always contingent on the recognition that one’s perspective can be superseded. The politics of such a skepticism is firmly rooted in a view of authority that is not dependent merely on the logic of epistemological arguments, but is deeply forged in “a creation of a politics of truth that defines the true as that which liberates and furthers specific processes of liberation.”<sup>17</sup>

Transformative intellectuals then need to begin with a recognition of those manifestations of suffering that constitute historical memory as well as the immediate conditions of oppression. The pedagogical rationality at work here is one that defines radical educators as bearers of “dangerous memory,” intellectuals who keep alive the memory of human suffering along with the forms of knowledge and struggles in which such suffering was shaped and contested. Dangerous memory has two dimensions: “that of hope and that of suffering . . . it recounts the history of the marginal, the vanquished, and the oppressed,”<sup>18</sup> and in doing so posits the need for a new kind of subjectivity and community in which the conditions that create such suffering can be eliminated. Michel Foucault describes the political project that is central to the meaning of dangerous memory as an affirmation of the insurrection of subjugated knowledges—those forms of historical and popular knowledge that have been suppressed or ignored, and through which it becomes possible to discover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle. Underlying this view of dangerous memory and subjugated knowledge is a logic that provides the basis on which transformative intellectuals can advance both the language of critique and the language of possibility and hope. Foucault is worth quoting on this issue:

By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised . . . blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism . . . draws upon and reveals. . . . On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition of scientificity. I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges . . . which involve what I would call a popular knowledge . . . a particular, local, regional knowledge . . . which is opposed by everything around it—that is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work.<sup>19</sup>

I have spent some time developing the rationale that teachers might use for legitimating a form of authority that both defines and endorses their role as transformative intellectuals. I believe that it is in this combination of critique, the reconstruction of the relationship between knowledge and power, and the commitment to a solidarity with the oppressed that the basis exists for a form of emancipatory authority that can structure the philosophical and political basis for a pedagogy that is

both empowering and transformative. Of course, developing a legitimating basis for a form of emancipatory authority does not guarantee that a transformative pedagogy will follow, but it does provide the principles for making such a transformative pedagogy possible. Furthermore, it establishes the criteria for organizing curricula and classroom social relations around goals designed to prepare students to relate, understand, and value the relation between an existentially lived public space and their own practical learning. By public space I mean, as Hannah Arendt did, a concrete set of learning conditions where people come together to speak, to dialogue, to share their stories, and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken the possibility for active citizenship.<sup>20</sup>

School and classroom practices in this sense can be organized around forms of learning in which the knowledge and skills acquired serve to prepare students to later develop and maintain those counterpublic spheres outside of schools that are so vital for developing webs of solidarity in which democracy as a social movement operates as an active force. Maxine Greene, in her usual eloquent manner, speaks to the need for educators to create such public spaces in their own classrooms as a pedagogical precondition for educating students to struggle in an active democracy.

We need spaces . . . for expression, for freedom . . . a public space . . . where living persons can come together in speech and action, each one free to articulate a distinctive perspective, all of them granted equal worth. It must be a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven, and where a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed. . . . There must be a teachable capacity to bring into being . . . a public composed of persons with many voices and many perspectives, out of whose multiple intelligences may still emerge a durable and worthwhile common world. If educators can renew their hopes and speak out once again, if they can empower more persons in the multiple domains of possibility, we shall not have to fear a lack of productivity, a lack of dignity or standing in the world. We will be in pursuit of the crucial values; we will be creating our own purposes as we move.<sup>21</sup>

### **Emancipatory Authority and Practical Learning**

Central to developing a critical pedagogy consistent with the principles of emancipatory authority is the need for radical educators to reconstruct the relations between knowledge, power, and desire in order to bring together what James Donald refers to as two often separate strug-

gles within schools: the changing of circumstances and the changing of subjectivities.<sup>22</sup> In the first case, the central issue that needs to be explored by educators is identifying the kinds of material and ideological preconditions that need to exist for schools to become effective. This issue covers a wide range of concerns such as active parent involvement in the schools, adequate health care and nutrition for students, high student morale, and adequate financial resources.<sup>23</sup> All of these factors represent resources through which power is exercised and made manifest. Power in this sense refers to the means of getting things done, and as Foucault claims, "consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome to govern, in this sense, to structure the possible field of action of others."<sup>24</sup>

For teachers, the relationship between authority and power is manifested not only in the degree to which they legitimate and exercise control over students (a central concern of conservatives), but equally important through the capacity they possess to influence the conditions under which they work. I have written on this matter elsewhere and will not pursue it here in any detail,<sup>25</sup> but it is important to stress that unless teachers have both the authority and the power to organize and shape the conditions of their work so that they can teach collectively, produce alternative curricula, and engage in a form of emancipatory politics, any talk of developing and implementing progressive pedagogy ignores the reality of what goes on in the daily lives of teachers and is nonsensical. Simply put, the conditions under which teachers work are currently overtaxing and demeaning, and need to be restructured so as to both dignify the nature of their work and allow them to act in a creative and responsible fashion.

The major issues I will focus on here concern the ways in which teachers can empower their students through what they teach, how they teach, and the means whereby school knowledge can be made worthwhile and interesting at the same time. Central to both concerns is the linking of power to knowledge. This raises the issue regarding the kinds of knowledge educators can provide for students that will empower them not only to understand and engage the world around them, but also to exercise the kind of courage needed to change the wider social reality when necessary.

Radical educators need to begin with a certain amount of clarity regarding the kind of curriculum they want to develop at the different levels of schooling. In my mind this should be a curriculum that gives a central place to the issue of "real" democracy. In developing such a focus, radical educators must rework those aspects of the traditional curriculum in which democratic possibilities exist, but in doing so they

must also exercise an incessant critical analysis of those inherent characteristics that reproduce inequitable social relations. At issue here is the need for radical educators to recognize that power relations exist in correlation with forms of school knowledge that both distort the truth and produce it. Such a consideration not only suggests that any attempt at developing a curriculum for democratic empowerment must examine the conditions of knowledge and how such knowledge distorts reality; it also suggests that radical educators reconstitute the very nature of the knowledge/power relationship. In doing so, they need to understand that knowledge does more than distort, it also produces particular forms of life; it has, as Foucault points out, a productive, positive function.<sup>26</sup> It is this productive function of knowledge that must be appropriated with a radical intent. It is important to recognize that while radical educators often refuse, subvert, and, where necessary, critically appropriate dominant forms of knowledge, this does not mean that they should continue working exclusively within the language of critique. On the contrary, the major thrust of a critical pedagogy should center around generating knowledge that presents concrete possibilities for empowering people. To put it more specifically, a critical pedagogy needs a language of possibility, one that provides the pedagogical basis for teaching democracy while simultaneously making schooling more democratic.

In general terms, a critical pedagogy needs to focus on what Colin Fletcher calls themes for democracy and democracy in learning.<sup>27</sup> In the first instance, the curriculum incorporates themes that recognize the urgent problems of adult life. Such knowledge includes not only the basic skills students will need to work and live in the wider society, but also knowledge about the social forms through which human beings live, become conscious, and sustain themselves. This includes knowledge about power and how it works,<sup>28</sup> as well as analyses of those practices such as racism, sexism, and class exploitation that structure and mediate the encounters of everyday life. Of course, the point here is not merely to denounce such stereotypes but rather to expose and deconstruct the processes through which these dominant ideological representations are produced, legitimated, and circulated in society. In many respects, the curriculum should be built on knowledge that starts with the problems and needs of students. It must, however, be so designed that it can provide the basis for a critique of dominant forms of knowledge. Finally, such a curriculum should provide students with a language through which they can analyze their own lived relations and experiences in a manner that is both affirmative and critical. R. W. Connell and his associates in Australia provide a clear analysis of the theoretical elements that characterize this type of curriculum in their formulation

of the kinds of knowledge that should be taught to empower working-class children. They write:

It proposes that working-class kids get access to formal knowledge via learning which begins with their own experience and the circumstances which shape it, but does not stop there. This approach neither accepts the existing organization of academic knowledge nor simply inverts it. It draws on existing school knowledge and on what working-class people already know, and organizes this selection of information around problems such as economic survival and collective action, handling the disruption of households by unemployment, responding to the impact of new technology, managing problems of personal identity and association, understanding how schools work and why.<sup>29</sup>

A curriculum based on an emancipatory notion of authority is one in which the particular forms of life, culture, and interaction that students bring to school are honored in such a way that students can begin to view such knowledge in both a critical and a useful way. All too often students from the working class and other subordinate groups react to dominant school knowledge and ideas as if they were weapons being used against them. On the other hand, curricula developed as part of a radical pedagogy privilege subordinate knowledge forms and reconstruct classroom life as an arena for new forms of sociality. That is, instead of a stress on the individualistic and competitive approaches to learning, students are encouraged to work together on projects, both in terms of their production and in terms of their evaluation. This suggests that students must learn within social forms that allow them to exercise a degree of self-consciousness about their own interactions as class, gendered, racial, and ethnic subjects. In addition to analyzing problems and issues that apply to the immediate contexts of students' lives, a radical pedagogy needs to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside the immediate experience of students' lives in order to broaden their sense of understanding and possibility. This means that students need to learn and appropriate other codes of experience as well as other discourses in time and place that extend their horizons while constantly pushing them to test what it means to resist oppression, work collectively, and exercise authority from the position of an ever-developing sense of knowledge, expertise, and commitment. It also means providing the pedagogical conditions for raising new wants, needs, and ambitions, and real hope, but always in a context that makes such hope realizable.

Giving students the opportunity to learn by understanding the mediations and social forms that shape their own experiences is important not

merely because this provides them with a critical way to understand the familiar terrain of everyday practical life. It is also part of a pedagogical strategy that attempts to both recover and engage the experiences that students exhibit so as to understand how such experiences have been accomplished and legitimated within specific social and historical conditions. I want to stress that the issue of student experience must be seen as central to a critical pedagogy. It is essential that radical educators understand how student experience is both constructed and engaged, because it is through such experiences that students produce accounts of who they are and constitute themselves as particular individuals. Student experience is the stuff of culture, agency, and self-production and must play a definitive role in any emancipatory curriculum. It is therefore imperative that radical educators learn how to understand, legitimate, and interrogate such experience. This means not only understanding the cultural and social forms through which students learn how to define themselves, but also learning how to critically engage such experiences in a way that refuses to disconfirm them or render them illegitimate. Knowledge has first of all to be made meaningful to students before it can be made critical. It never speaks for itself, but rather is constantly mediated through the ideological and cultural experiences that students bring to the classroom. To ignore such experiences is to deny the grounds on which students learn, speak, and imagine. Judith Williamson puts this issue as well as anyone:

Walter Benjamin has said that the best ideas are no use if they do not make something useful of the person who holds them; on an even simpler level, I would add that the best ideas don't even exist if there isn't anyone to hold them. If we cannot get the "radical curriculum" across, or arouse the necessary interest in the "basic skills," there is no point to them. But in any case, which do we ultimately care more about: our ideas, or the child/student we are trying to teach them to?<sup>30</sup>

Students cannot learn "usefully" unless teachers develop an understanding of the various ways in which subjectivities are constituted through different social domains. At stake here is the need for teachers to understand how experiences produced in the various domains and layers of everyday life give rise to the different "voices" students use to give meaning to their own worlds and, consequently, to their own existence in the larger society. Unless educators address the question of how aspects of the social are experienced, mediated, and produced by students, it will be difficult for radical educators to tap into the drives, emotions, and interests that give subjectivity its own unique "voice" and provide the momentum for learning itself.

### **Emancipatory Authority, Teachers, and Social Movements**

I want to conclude this article by arguing that teachers who want to function as transformative intellectuals who legitimate their role through an emancipatory form of authority will have to do more than gain further control of their working conditions and teach critical pedagogy. They will have to open up every aspect of formal education to active, popular contestation and to other front line-groups and constituencies. This includes community members, parents, support staff, youth-advocacy groups, and others with vital interests in the schools. There are a number of reasons for arguing this position. First, it is impossible to argue for schools as democratic, counterpublic spheres if such institutions narrowly define and exclude various community groups from talking about educational concerns. Second, any notion of educational reform along with its reconstructed view of authority and pedagogy needs to focus on the institutional arrangements that structure and mediate the role of schooling in the wider society. Reforms that limit their focus to specific school problems or the politics of instruction ignore the ways in which public education is shaped, bent, and moved by wider economic, political, and social concerns. Third, radical educators need to make alliances with other progressive social movements in an effort to create public spheres where the discourse of democracy can be debated and where the issues that arise in such a context can be collectively acted on, in a political fashion if necessary.

Teachers must be willing and prepared to make their schools more responsive to the wider community. In doing so, they will have to redefine the role and nature of authority as it is currently constituted around the ideology of professionalism, an ideology that is largely shaped by unions, which often define themselves in opposition to wider school constituencies and community demands. As it stands, teachers tend to legitimate their roles as professionals through appeals to knowledge and expertise that is highly exclusionary and undemocratic. Professionalism as it is presently defined has little to do with democracy as a social movement. By creating active, organic links with the community, teachers can open their schools to the diverse resources offered by the community. In doing so, they can give the schools access to those community traditions, histories, and cultures that are often submerged or discredited within the dominant school culture. It is an unfortunate truism that when communities are ignored by the schools, students find themselves situated in institutions that deny them a voice. As Ann Bastion and her colleagues argue:

School isolation works to deny students a link between what they learn in the classroom and the environment they function in outside the school. The lack of relevance and integration is particularly acute for minority and disadvantaged students, whose social and cultural background is not reflected, or is negatively reflected, in standard curricula based on a white, middle-class mainstream and on elitist structures of achievement. Isolation also denies communities the integrative and empowering capacities of the school as a community institution. Isolation denies schools the energy, resources, and, ultimately, the sympathies of community members.<sup>31</sup>

Community involvement in the schools can help to foster the necessary conditions for a constructive, ongoing debate over the goals, methods, and services that schools actually provide for students in specific localities. Moreover, it is essential that teachers take an active role in organizing with parents and others in their communities in order to remove political power from the hands of those political and economic groups and institutions who exercise an inordinate and sometimes damaging influence on school policy and curriculum.<sup>32</sup>

If radical educators are going to have any significant effect on the unequal economic, political, and social arrangements that plague schools and the wider society, they have no choice but to actively engage in the struggle for democracy with groups *outside* of their classrooms. Martin Carnoy reinforces this point by arguing that democracy has not been created by intellectuals acting within the confines of their classrooms.

Democracy has been developed by social movements, and those intellectuals and educators who were able to implement democratic reforms in education did so in part through appeals to such movements. If the working people, minorities, and women who have formed the social movements pressing for greater democracy in our society cannot be mobilized behind equality in education, with the increased public spending that this requires, there is absolutely no possibility that equality in education will be implemented.<sup>33</sup>

Teachers need to define themselves as transformative intellectuals who act as radical teachers and educators. Radical teacher as a category defines the pedagogical and political role teachers have within the schools while the notion of radical education speaks to a wider sphere of intervention in which the same concern with authority, knowledge, power, and democracy redefines and broadens the political nature of their pedagogical task, which is to teach, learn, listen, and mobilize in the interest of a more just and equitable social order. By linking schooling to wider social movements, teachers can begin to redefine the nature and importance of pedagogical struggle and in doing so provide the basis to fight for forms of emancipatory authority as a foundation for the

establishment of freedom and justice. Nyberg and Farber have performed a theoretical service in raising the importance of authority for educators. The next task is to organize and struggle for the promise emancipatory authority offers to the schools, the community, and the wider society as a whole.

## Notes

I want to thank my colleague and friend Peter McLaren for the comments and critical reading of this article. Of course, I am solely responsible for its content.

1. A recent set of writings on this view can be found in Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr., "High Expectations and Disciplined Effort," in *Against Mediocrity*, ed. Robert Fancher and Diane Ravitch (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984); Diane Ravitch, *The Schools We Deserve* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Thomas Sowell, *Education: Assumptions vs. History* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1986).

2. Edward A. Wynne, "The Great Tradition in Education: Transmitting Moral Values," *Educational Leadership* 43, no. 4 (December 1985): 7; and idem, *Developing Character: Transmitting Knowledge* (Posen, Ill.: ARL Services, 1984).

3. For an exceptional critique of this position, see Barbara Finkelstein, "Education and the Retreat from Democracy in the United States, 1979-1982," *Teachers College Record* 86, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 275-82; and Maxine Greene, "Public Education and the Public Space," *Educational Researcher*, June-July 1982, pp. 4-9.

4. Agnes Heller, "Marx and the Liberation of Humankind," *Philosophy and Society Criticism* 3/4 (1982): 367.

5. See David Nyberg and Paul Farber, "Authority in Education," *Teachers College Record* 88, no. 1 (Fall 1986), pp. 4-14.

6. Critiques of this position can be found in William V. Spanos, "The Apollonian Investment of Modern Humanist Education: The Example of Mathew Arnold, Irving Babbitt, and I. A. Richards," *Cultural Critique* 1 (Fall 1985): 7-22; and Henry A. Giroux et al., "The Need for Cultural Studies: Resisting Intellectuals and Oppositional Public Spheres," *Dalhousie Review* 64, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 472-86.

7. This view of radical educational theory and its various representations is comprehensively analyzed in Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education under Siege* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1985).

8. Kenneth D. Benne, "Authority in Education," *Harvard Educational Review* 40, no. 3 (August 1970): 392-93.

9. Cited in Colin Gordon, "Afterword," in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Press, 1980), p. 233.

10. Nyberg and Farber, "Authority in Education"; Steve Tozer, "Dominant Ideology and the Teacher's Authority," *Contemporary Education* 56, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 150-53; idem, "Civism, Democratic Empowerment, and the Social Foun-

dations of Education," in *Philosophy of Education Society*, 1985, ed. David Nyberg (Normal Ill.: Philosophy of Education Society, 1986), pp. 186–200; and George Wood, "Schooling in a Democracy," *Education Theory* 34, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 219–38.

11. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); idem, "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," reprinted in *Classic American Philosophers*, ed. Max Fisch (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951); and George S. Counts, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order* (New York: Day, 1932). See also Richard J. Bernstein, "Dewey, Democracy: The Task Ahead of Us," in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, ed. John Rajchman and Cornell West (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

12. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participating Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

13. Sheldon Wolin, "Revolutionary Action Today," in *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, p. 256.

14. For an important discussion of these concepts, see Richard Lichtman, "Socialist Freedom," in *Socialist Perspectives*, ed. Phyllis Jacobson and Julius Jacobson (New York: Kary-Cohl Publishing, 1983); and Landon E. Beyer and George Wood, "Critical Inquiry and Moral Action in Education," *Educational Theory* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 1–14.

15. Doug White, "Education: Controlling the Participants," *Arena* 72 (1985): 78.

16. Sharon Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity* (New York: Orbis Press, 1985), p. 31.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 36. A critical notion of memory can also be found in the work of the Frankfurt School, especially in the work of Marcuse, Adorno, and Benjamin. For an overview of this issue, see Martin Jay, "Anamnestic Totalization," *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 1–15.

19. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 82–83.

20. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

21. Maxine Greene, "Excellence: Meanings and Multiplicity," *Teachers College Record* 86, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 296.

22. James Donald, "Troublesome Texts: On Subjectivity and Schooling," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 6, no. 3 (1985): 342; and Roger Simon, "Work Experience as the Production of Subjectivity," in *Pedagogy and Cultural Power*, ed. David Livingstone (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1986).

23. For an excellent analysis of these issues and how progressive educators can deal with them, see Ann Bastion et al., *Choosing Equality: The Case for Democratic Schooling* (New York: New World Foundation, 1985).

24. Michel Foucault, "The Subject of Power," in *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rainbow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 221. For an interesting analysis of why power should be a central category in educational discourse, see David Nyberg, *Power over Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

25. Aronowitz and Giroux, *Education under Siege*.

26. Foucault, "The Subject of Power."

27. Colin Fletcher, Maxine Caron, and Wyn Williams, *Schools on Trial* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985).

28. Nyberg rightly argues that educators need to develop a theory and pedagogy about power as a central aspect of the curriculum (Nyberg, *Power over Power*).

29. R. W. Connell et al., *Making the Difference* (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 199.

30. Judith Williamson, "Is There Anyone Here from a Classroom," *Screen* 26, no. 1 (January–February, 1985): 94; see also Henry A. Giroux, "Radical Pedagogy and the Politics of Student Voice," *Interchange* 17, no. 1 (1986): 48–69.

31. Ann Bastion et al., "Choosing Equality: The Case for Democratic Schooling," *Social Policy* 15, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 47.

32. Timothy Sieber, "The Politics of Middle-Class Success in an Inner-City Public School," *Boston University Journal of Education* 164, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 30–47.

33. Martin Carnoy, "Education, Democracy, and Social Conflict," *Harvard Educational Review* 53, no. 4 (November 1983): 401–02.

PART TWO

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*Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom*

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# 5

## *Radical Pedagogy and the Politics of Student Voice*

WITHIN THE LAST DECADE, PUBLIC schooling in the United States has been criticized quite strongly by both radical and conservative critics. Central to both positions has been a concern with what has been called the reproductive theory of schooling. According to the reproductive thesis, schools are not to be valued in the traditional sense as public spheres engaged in teaching students the knowledge and skills of democracy. On the contrary, schools are to be viewed in more instrumental terms and should be measured against the need to reproduce the values, social practices, and skills needed for the dominant corporate order. Of course, conservative and radical critics have taken opposing positions regarding the significance of schooling as a reproductive public sphere. For conservatives, schools have strayed too far from the logic of capital, and because of this, are now held responsible for the economic recession of the 1970s, the loss of foreign markets to international competitors, and the shortage of trained workers for an increasingly complex technological economy. Conservatives have further argued that schools need to reform their curricula in order to serve the corporate interests of the dominant society more faithfully.<sup>1</sup> Underlying this theoretical shorthand is the demand that schools place a greater emphasis on character formation, basic skills, and corporate needs.

Radical educators, on the other hand, have used the reproductive thesis to criticize the role that schools play in American society. In general terms, they have argued that schools are “reproductive” in that they provide different classes and social groups with forms of knowledge, skills, and culture that not only legitimate the dominant culture but also track students into a labor force differentiated by gender, racial, and class considerations.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their differences, both radicals and conservatives alike have abandoned the Deweyian vision of public schools as democratic spheres, as places where the skills of democracy can be practised, debated, and analyzed. Similarly, both share a disturbing indifference to

the ways in which students mediate and express their sense of place, time, and history and their contradictory, uncertain, and incomplete interactions with each other and with the dynamics of schooling. In other words, both radical and conservative ideologies generally fail to engage the politics of voice and representation—the forms of narrative and dialogue—around which students make sense of their lives and schools. While this is an understandable position for conservatives or for those whose logic of instrumentalism and social control is at odds with an emancipatory notion of human agency, it represents a serious theoretical and political failing on the part of radical educators.

This failing is evident in a number of areas. First, radical education theory has abandoned the language of possibility for the language of critique. That is, in viewing schools as primarily reproductive sites, it has not been able to develop a theory of schooling that offers the possibility for counterhegemonic struggle and ideological battle. Within this discourse, schools, teachers, and students have been written off as mere extensions of the logic of capital. Instead of viewing schools as sites of contestation and conflict, radical educators often provide us with a simplified version of domination that seems to suggest that the only political alternative to the current role that schools play in the wider society is to abandon them altogether. Since they view schools as ideologically and politically overburdened by the dominant society, they find unproblematic the moral and political necessity of developing a programmatic discourse for working within them. Thus, the role that teachers, students, parents, and community people might play in waging a political battle in the public schools is rarely explored as a possibility. One consequence is that the primacy of the political in this project turns in on itself and the defeatist logic of capitalist domination is accepted as the basis for a “radical” theory of schooling.

Second, in their failure to develop an educational theory that posits real alternatives within schools, radical educators remain politically powerless to combat the conservative forces which have adroitly exploited and appropriated popular concerns over public education. In other words, the educational Left not only misrepresents the nature of school life and the degree to which schools *do not* merely ape the logic of corporate interests; it also unwittingly reinforces the conservative thrust to fashion schools in their own ideological terms. In short, radical educators have failed to develop a language that engages schools as sites of possibility, that is, as places where students can be educated to take their places in society from a position of empowerment rather than from a position of ideological and economic subordination.

The major problem that I want to inquire into in this essay is one that is central to any legitimate notion of radical pedagogy—that is, how to

develop a radical pedagogy that acknowledges the spaces, tensions, and possibilities for struggle within the day-to-day workings of schools. Underlying this problematic is the need to generate a set of categories that not only provides new modes of critical interrogation but also points to alternative strategies and modes of practice around which a radical pedagogy can be realized.

The basis for such a task lies at the outset in redefining the concept of power with respect to everyday experience and the construction of classroom pedagogy and student voice. For radical educators, power has to be understood as a concrete set of practices that produces social forms through which different experiences and modes of subjectivities are constructed. Power, in this sense, includes but goes beyond the call for institutional change or for the distribution of political and economic resources; it also signifies a level of conflict and struggle that plays itself out around the exchange of discourse and the lived experiences that such discourse produces, mediates, and legitimates.

Another major assumption here is that discourse is both a medium and a product of power. In this sense, discourse is intimately connected with those ideological and material forces out of which individuals and groups fashion a “voice.” As Bakhtin (1981) puts it:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (p. 249)

If language is inseparable from lived experience and from how people create a distinctive voice, it is also connected to an intense struggle among different groups over what will count as meaningful and whose cultural capital will prevail in legitimating particular ways of life. Within schools, discourse produces and legitimates configurations of time, space, and narrative, placing particular renderings of ideology, behavior, and the representation of everyday life in a privileged perspective. As a “technology of power,” discourse is given concrete expression in the forms of knowledge that constitute the formal curriculum as well as in the structuring of classroom social relations that constitute the hidden curriculum of schooling. Needless to say, these pedagogical practices and forms are “read” in different ways by teachers and students.

The importance of the relationship between power and discourse for a radical pedagogy is that it provides a theoretical grounding for interrogating the issue of how ideology is inscribed in those forms of educational discourse through which school experiences and practices are ordered and constituted. Moreover, it points to the necessity of accounting theoretically for the ways in which language, ideology, history, and expe-

rience come together to produce, define, and constrain particular forms of teacher-student practice. The value of this approach is that it refuses to remain trapped in modes of analysis that examine student voice and pedagogical experience from the perspective of the reproductive thesis. That is, power and discourse are now investigated not merely as the single echo of the logic of capital, but as a polyphony of voices mediated within different layers of reality shaped through an interaction of dominant and subordinate forms of power. By recognizing and interrogating the different layers of meaning and struggle that make up the terrain of schooling, radical educators can fashion not only a language of critique but also a language of possibility. The remainder of this essay will engage that task. First I will critically analyze the two major discourses of mainstream educational theory. At the risk of undue simplification, these are characterized as conservative and liberal pedagogical discourses. Then I will attempt to develop a discourse appropriate for a radical pedagogy, one that draws heavily upon the works of Paulo Freire and Mikhail Bakhtin.

## **Conservative Discourse and Educational Practice**

### ***Schooling and Positive Knowledge***

Conservative educational discourse often presents a view of culture and knowledge in which both are treated as part of a storehouse of artifacts constituted as canon. While this discourse has a number of characteristic expressions, its most recent theoretical defence can be found in Mortimer J. Adler's *The Paideia Proposal*. Adler calls for the schools to implement a core course of subjects in all 12 years of public schooling. His appeal is to forms of pedagogy that enable students to master skills and specific forms of understanding with respect to predetermined forms of knowledge. In this view, knowledge appears beyond the reach of critical interrogation except at the level of immediate application. In other words, there is no mention of how such knowledge is chosen, whose interests it represents, or why students might be interested in acquiring it. In fact, students in this perspective are characterized as a unitary body removed from the ideological and material forces that construct their subjectivities, interests, and concerns in diverse and multiple ways.

I would argue that the concept of difference in this approach becomes the negative apparition of the "other." This is particularly clear in Adler's case since he dismisses social and cultural differences among students with the simplistic and reductionistic comment that "despite their manifold individual differences the children are all the same in their human

nature" (1982, p. 42). In this view, a predetermined and hierarchically arranged body of knowledge is taken as the cultural currency to be dispensed to all children regardless of their diversity and interests. Equally important is the fact that the acquisition of such knowledge becomes the structuring principle around which the school curriculum is organized and particular classroom social relations legitimated. It is worth noting that it is exclusively an appeal to school knowledge that constitutes the measure and worth of what defines the learning experience. That is, the value of both teacher and student experience is premised on the transmission and inculcation of what can be termed "positive knowledge." Consequently, it is in the distribution, management, measurement, and legitimation of such knowledge that this type of pedagogy invests its energies. Phil Cusick (1983) comments in his ethnographic study of three urban secondary schools on the problematic nature of legitimating and organizing school practices around the notion of "positive knowledge":

By positive knowledge I mean that which is generally accepted as having an empirical or traditional base. . . . The assumption that the acquisition of positive knowledge can be made interesting and appealing in part underlies the laws that compel everyone to attend school, at least until their mid teens. . . . The conventional assumption would have it that the curriculum of a school exists as a body of knowledge, agreed upon by staff and approved by the general community and by district authorities who have some expertise, and that it reflects the best thinking about what young people need to succeed in our society. But I did not find that. (pp. 25, 71)

What Cusick did find was that school knowledge organized in these terms was not compelling enough to interest many of the students he observed. Moreover, educators locked into this perspective responded to student disinterest, violence, and resistance by shifting their concerns—from actually teaching positive knowledge to maintaining order and control, or as they put it, "keeping the lid on." Cusick is worth quoting at length:

Not only did the administrators spend their time on those matters [administration and control], they also tended to evaluate other elements, such as the performance of teachers, according to their ability to maintain order. They tended to arrange other elements of the school according to how they contributed or failed to contribute to the maintenance of order. The outstanding example of that was the implementation in both urban schools of the five-by-five day, wherein the students were brought in early in the morning, given five periods of instruction with a few minutes in between and a fifteen-minute mid-morning break, and released before one o'clock. There were no free periods, study halls, cafeteria sessions, or assemblies.

No occasions were allowed in which violence could occur. The importance of maintaining order in those public secondary schools could not be underestimated. (p. 108)

Within this form of pedagogical practice, student voice is reduced to the immediacy of its performance, existing as something to be measured, administered, registered, and controlled. Its distinctiveness, its disjunctions, its lived quality are all dissolved under an ideology of control and management. In the name of efficiency, the resources and wealth of student life histories are generally ignored. A major problem with this perspective is that the celebration of positive knowledge does not guarantee that students will have any interest in the pedagogical practices it produces, especially since such knowledge appears to have little connection to the everyday experiences of the students themselves. Teachers who structure classroom experiences out of this discourse generally face enormous problems in the public schools, especially those in urban centres. Boredom and/or disruption appear to be primary products. To some extent, of course, teachers who rely upon classroom practices that exhibit a disrespect for students are themselves victims of labor conditions that virtually make it impossible for them to teach as critical educators. At the same time, these conditions are determined by dominant interests and by discourses that provide the ideological legitimation for promoting hegemonic classroom practices. In short, such practices not only involve symbolic violence against students by devaluing the cultural capital which they possess, they also tend to restrict teachers to pedagogical models that legitimate their role as white collar clerks. Unfortunately, the notion of teachers as clerks is part of a long tradition of management models of pedagogy and administration that has dominated American public education.

Needless to say, conservative educational discourse is not all of one piece; there is another position within this perspective that does not ignore the relationship between knowledge and student experience. It is to this position that I will now turn.

### *Schooling and the Ideology of Positive Thinking*

In another important variation of conservative educational theory, the analysis and meaning of experience shift from a preoccupation with transmitting positive knowledge to developing forms of pedagogy that recognize and appropriate cultural traditions and experiences that different students bring to the school setting. The theoretical cornerstone of this position is developed around a modified view of the concept of

culture. That is, the static notion of culture as a storehouse of traditional knowledge and skills is replaced here by a more anthropological approach.

In its revised form, culture is viewed as a form of production, specifically, as the ways in which human beings make sense of their lives, feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and the wider society. Within this approach, the notion of difference is stripped of its "otherness" and accommodated to the logic of a "polite civic humanism" (Corrigan, 1985, p. 7). Difference no longer symbolizes the threat of disruption. On the contrary, it now signals an invitation for diverse cultural groups to join hands under the democratic banner of an integrative pluralism. The specific ideology that defines the relation between difference and pluralism is central to this version of conservative educational thought in that it legitimates the idea that in spite of differences manifested around race, ethnicity, language, values, and life styles, there is an underlying equality among different cultural groups that allegedly disavows that any one of them is privileged. At work here is an attempt to subsume the notion of difference within a discourse and set of practices that promote harmony, equality, and respect within and between diverse cultural groups.

This is not meant to suggest that conflict is ignored in this approach; I am not suggesting that the social and political antagonisms that characterize the relationship between different cultural groups and the larger society are altogether denied. On the contrary, such problems are generally recognized but as issues to be discussed and overcome in the interest of creating a "happy and cooperative class," which will hopefully play a fundamental role in bringing about a "happy and cooperative world" (Jeffcoate, 1979, p. 122). Within this context, cultural representations of difference as *conflict and tension* only become pedagogically workable within a language of unity and cooperation that legitimates a false and particularly "cheery" view of Western civilization. Consequently, the concept of difference turns into its opposite, for difference now becomes meaningful as something to be resolved within *relevant* forms of exchange and class discussions. Lost here is a respect for the autonomy of different cultural logics and any understanding of how such logics operate within asymmetrical relations of power and domination. In other words, the equality that is associated with different forms of culture serves to displace political considerations regarding the ways in which dominant and subordinate groups interact and struggle both in and outside the schools.

The pedagogical practices deriving from this notion of difference and cultural diversity are suffused with the language of positive thinking. This becomes clear in curriculum projects developed around these

practices. These projects generally structure curriculum problems so as to include references to the conflicts and tensions that exist among diverse groups, but rather than educating students to the ways in which various groups struggle within relations of power and domination as these are played out in the larger social arena, they subordinate these issues to pedagogical goals that attempt to foster a mutual respect and understanding in the interest of national unity. The apologetic nature of this discourse is evident in the kinds of educational objectives that structure its classroom practices. The complexity and sweat of social change are quietly ignored.

In more sophisticated versions, conservative educational theory recognizes the existence of racial, gender, ethnic, and other types of conflict among different groups but is more ideologically honest about why they should *not* be emphasized in the school curriculum. Appealing to the interests of a "common culture," this position calls for a pedagogical emphasis on the common interests and ideals that characterize the nation. As one of its spokespersons, Nathan Glazer (1977), puts it, the choice of what is taught "must be guided . . . by our conception of a desirable society, of the relationship between what we select to teach and the ability of people to achieve such a society and live together in it" (p. 51). What is troubling with this position is that it lacks any sense of culture as a terrain of struggle; moreover, it does not pay any attention to the relationship between knowledge and power. In fact, underlying Glazer's statement is a facile egalitarianism that assumes but does not demonstrate that all groups can actively participate in the development of such a society. While appealing to a fictive harmony, his unitary "our" suggests an unwillingness to either indict or interrogate existing structures of domination. This harmony is nothing more than an image in the discourse of those who do not have to suffer the injustices experienced by subordinated groups. In short, this version of conservative educational theory falls prey to a perspective that idealizes the future while stripping the present of its deeply rooted contradictions and tensions. This is not merely the discourse of harmony; it is also a set of interests that refuses to posit the relations between culture and power as a moral question demanding emancipatory political action.

### **Liberal Discourse and Educational Practice**

Liberal discourse in educational theory and practice has a long association with various tenets of what has been loosely called progressive education in the United States. From John Dewey to the free school movement of the sixties and seventies to the present emphasis on multiculturalism, there has been a concern with taking the needs and

the cultural experiences of students as a starting point for developing relevant forms of pedagogy.<sup>3</sup> Since it is impossible to analyze in this essay all of the theoretical twists and turns this movement has taken, I want to focus exclusively on some of its dominant ideological tendencies and the way in which its discourses structure the experiences of students and teachers.

### ***Liberal Theory as the Ideology of Deprivation***

In its most common-sense form, liberal educational theory favors a notion of experience that is equated either with "fulfilling the needs of kids" or with developing cordial relations with students so as to be able to maintain order and control in the school. In many respects, these two discourses represent different sides of the same educational ideology. In the ideology of "need fulfillment," the category of need represents an *absence* of a particular set of experiences. In most cases, what educators determine as missing are either the culturally specific experiences that school authorities believe students must acquire in order to enrich the quality of their lives or the fundamental skills that they will "need" in order to get jobs once they leave school. Underlying this view of experience is the logic of cultural deprivation theory, which defines education in terms of cultural enrichment, remediation, and basics.

In this version of liberal pedagogy, there is little recognition that what is legitimated as privileged school experience often represents the endorsement of a particular way of life, signified as superior by the "revenge" that befalls those who do not share its attributes. Specifically, the experience of the student as "other" is cast as deviant, underprivileged, or "uncultured." Consequently, not only do students bear the sole responsibility for school failure, but also there is little room for questioning the ways in which administrators and teachers actually create and sustain the problems they attribute to students. This view of students, particularly of those from subordinate groups, is mirrored by a refusal to examine the assumptions and pedagogical practices that legitimate forms of experience embodying the logic of domination. One glaring example of this was brought to me by a secondary school teacher in one of my graduate courses who constantly referred to her working-class students as "low life." In her case, there was no sense of how language was actively constructing her relations with these students, though I am sure the message was not lost on them. One practice that sometimes emerges from this aspect of liberal educational ideology is that of blaming students for their perceived problems while simultaneously humiliating them in an effort to get them to participate in classroom activities. The following incident captures this approach:

The teacher, after taking attendance for fifteen minutes, wrote a few phrases on the board: "Adam and Eve," "spontaneous generation," and "evolution," and told the students that: "For the next forty minutes you are to write an essay on how you think the world started, and here are three possibilities which, you know, we discussed last week. I did this with my college prep class and they liked it. . . . It will do you good. Teach you to think for a change, which is something you don't do often." (Cusick, 1983, p. 55)

### *Liberal Theory as the Pedagogy of Cordial Relations*

When students refuse to surrender to this type of humiliation, teachers and school administrators generally face problems of order and control. One response is to promote a pedagogy of cordial relations. The classic instance of dealing with students in this approach is to try to keep them "happy" by either indulging their personal interests through appropriately developed modes of "low status" knowledge or by developing good rapport with them. Defined as the "other," students now become objects of inquiry in the interest of being understood so as to be more easily controlled. The knowledge, for example, used by teachers with these students is often drawn from cultural forms identified with class-, race-, and gender-specific interests. But relevance, in this instance, has little to do with emancipatory concerns; instead, it translates into pedagogical practices that attempt to appropriate forms of student and popular culture in the interests of maintaining social control. Furthermore, it provides a legitimating ideology for forms of class, race, and gender tracking. The practice of tracking at issue here is developed in its most subtle form through an endless series of school electives that appear to legitimate the cultures of subordinated groups while actually incorporating them in a trivial pedagogical fashion. Thus, working-class girls are "advised" by guidance teachers to take "Girl Talk" while middle-class students have no doubts about the importance of taking classes in literary criticism. In the name of relevance and order, working-class males are encouraged to select "industrial arts" while their middle-class counterparts take courses in advanced chemistry. These practices and social forms along with the divergent interests and pedagogies they produce have been analyzed extensively elsewhere and need not be repeated here.<sup>4</sup>

### *Liberal Theory and the Pedagogy of Child Centredness*

In its theoretical forms, liberal educational discourse provides a "supportive" view of student experience and culture. Within this perspective, student experience is defined by the individualizing psychology of "child

centredness." Understood as part of a "natural" unfolding process, it is not tied to the imperatives of rigid disciplinary authority but to the exercise of self-control and self-regulation. The focus of analysis in this discourse is the child as a unitary subject, and pedagogical practices are structured around encouraging "healthy" expression and harmonious social relations. Central to this problematic is an ideology that equates freedom with "the bestowal of love" and with what Carl Rogers (1969) has called "unconditional positive regard" and "emphatic understanding." The liberal pedagogical canon demands that teachers emphasize self-directed learning, link knowledge to the personal experiences of students, and attempt to help students to interact with one another in a positive and harmonious fashion.

How student experiences are developed within this perspective is, of course, directly related to the larger question of how they are constructed and understood within the multiple discourses that embody and reproduce the social and cultural relations of the larger society. This issue is not only ignored in liberal views of educational theory; it is ignored in conservative discourses as well. The silence regarding forms of race, class, and gender discrimination and how these are reproduced in relations between the schools and the larger social order is what links conservative and liberal theories of education, constituting, what I call, the dominant educational discourse. Though I have already criticized some of the assumptions that inform the dominant educational discourses, I want to elaborate on these before I turn to how a radical pedagogy can be fashioned out of a theory of cultural politics.

### *Dominant Educational Discourse*

The dominant educational discourse falls prey to a deeply ingrained ideological tendency in American education as well as in the mainstream social sciences to separate culture from relations of power. By analyzing culture uncritically either as an object of veneration or as a set of practices that embody the traditions and values of diverse groups, this view depoliticizes culture. More specifically, there is no attempt to understand culture as shared and lived principles characteristic of different groups and classes as these emerge within inequitable relations of power and fields of struggle. Actually, culture remains unexplored as a particular relation between dominant and subordinate groups, expressed in antagonistic relations that embody and produce particular forms of meaning and action. In effect, these discourses exclude the concepts of "dominant" and "subordinate" culture altogether and by doing so fail to recognize the effect of wider political and social forces on all aspects of school organization and everyday classroom life.

By refusing to acknowledge the relations between culture and power, the dominant educational discourses fail to understand how schools are implicated in reproducing oppressive ideologies and social practices. Rather, they assume that schools can analyze problems faced by different cultural groups and that out of such analyses students will develop a sense of understanding and mutual respect that will in some way influence the wider society. But schools do more than influence society; they are also shaped by it. That is, schools are inextricably linked to a larger set of political and cultural processes and not only reflect the antagonisms embodied in such processes but also embody and reproduce them. This issue becomes clearer in statistical studies that reveal that "one out of every four students who enrolls in ninth grade (in the U.S.) drops out before high school graduation. Drop out rates for Black students are just under twice as great [as those] for White students; those for Hispanic students are just over twice as great. . . . In 1971, 51 percent of all White and 50 percent of all Black high school graduates went to college. In 1981, the rate of young Black high school graduates enrolled in college had fallen to 40 percent, in October of 1982, it fell to 36 percent" (NCAS, 1985, p. x).

The ideological importance of these statistics is that they point to ideological and material practices that are actively produced within the day-to-day activities of schooling but originate in the wider society. They also point to the silence on a number of questions pertaining to how schools produce class, race, and gender differentiations and the fundamental antagonisms that structure them. One issue the statistics point to is how wider forms of political, economic, social, and ideological domination and subordination might be invested in the language, texts, and social practices of the schools as well as in the experiences of the teachers and students themselves. An equally important concern centres around the issue of how power in schools is expressed as a set of relations that treats some groups as privileged while disconfirming others. Some important questions that could be pursued here include: What is the ideology at work when children are tested in a language they do not understand? What interests are being sustained by tracking black children who have no serious intellectual learning disabilities into classes for the educable mentally handicapped? What are the ideologies underlying practices in urban schools where the drop-out rates are 85 percent for Native Americans and between 70 and 80 percent for Puerto Rican students (NCAS, 1985, pp. 10, 14, 16)? The important point illuminated by these figures is that dominant educational discourses lack not only an adequate theory of domination but also a critical understanding of how experience is named, constructed, and legitimated in schools.

Another major criticism of dominant educational discourses focuses on the political nature of school language. Defined primarily in technical terms (mastery) or in terms of its communicative value in developing dialogue and transmitting information, language is abstracted from its political and ideological usage. For instance, language is privileged as a medium for exchanging and presenting knowledge, and, as such, is abstracted from its constitutive role in the struggle of various groups over different meanings, practices, and readings of the world. Within dominant educational theory, there is no sense of how language practices can be used to actively silence some students or of how favoring particular forms of discourse can work to disconfirm the traditions, practices, and values of subordinate language groups; similarly, there is a failure to have teachers acquire forms of language literacy that would translate, pedagogically, into a critical understanding of the structure of language and a capacity to help students validate and critically engage their own experience and cultural milieu.

It is not surprising that within dominant educational discourses, questions of cultural difference are sometimes reduced to a single emphasis on the learning and understanding of school knowledge, in particular, as presented through the form and content of curriculum texts. Lost here are the ways in which power is invested in institutional and ideological forces that bear down on and shape social practices of schooling. There is no clear understanding, for example, of how social relations operate in schools through the organization of time, space, and resources, or the way in which different groups experience these relations via their economic, political, and social locations outside of schools. Dominant educational theory not only fails to understand schooling as a cultural process that is inextricably linked to wider social forces; it also appears incapable of recognizing how teacher and student resistance may emerge in schools as part of a refusal either to teach or to accept the dictates of dominant school culture (Giroux, 1983).

In more specific terms, dominant educational discourses fail to analyze how the school as an agent of social and cultural control is mediated and contested by those whose interests it does not serve. In part, this is due to a functionalist view of schooling which sees schools as serving the needs of the dominant society without questioning either the nature of that society or the effects it has on the daily practices of schooling itself. The theoretical price paid for this type of functionalism is high. One consequence is that schools are seen as if they were removed from the tensions and antagonisms that characterize the wider society. As a result, it becomes impossible to understand schools as sites of struggle over power and meaning. Furthermore, there is no theoretic-

cal room in this approach to understand why subordinate groups may actively resist and deny the dominant culture as it is embodied in various aspects of classroom life.

### **Radical Pedagogy as a Form of Cultural Politics**

In this section, I want to develop a perspective that links radical pedagogy with a form of cultural politics. In doing so, I want to draw principally from the works of Paulo Freire and Mikhail Bakhtin and attempt to construct a theoretical model in which the notions of struggle, student voice, and critical dialogue are central to the goal of developing an emancipatory pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> Bakhtin's work is important because he views language usage as an eminently social and political act linked to the ways individuals define meaning and author their relations to the world through an ongoing dialogue with others. As the theoretician of difference, dialogue, and polyphonic voice, Bakhtin rightly emphasizes the need to understand the ongoing struggle between various groups over language and meaning as a moral and epistemological imperative. Accordingly, Bakhtin deepens our understanding of the nature of authorship by providing analyses of how people give value to and operate out of different layers of discourse. He also points to the pedagogical significance of critical dialogue as a form of authorship since it provides the medium and gives meaning to the multiple voices that construct the "texts" constitutive of everyday life.

Paulo Freire both extends and deepens Bakhtin's project. Like Bakhtin, Freire offers the possibility for organizing pedagogical experiences within social forms and practices that "speak" to developing more critical and dialogical modes of learning and struggle. But Freire's theory of experience is rooted in a view of language and culture that links dialogue and meaning to a social project emphasizing the primacy of the political. In this case, "empowerment" is defined as central to the collective struggle for a life without oppression and exploitation.

Both authors employ a view of language, dialogue, chronotype, and difference that rejects a totalizing view of history. Both argue that a critical pedagogy has to begin with a dialectical celebration of the languages of critique and possibility—an approach which finds its noblest expression in a discourse integrating critical analysis with social transformation. Similarly, both authors provide a pedagogical model that begins with problems rooted in the concrete experiences of everyday life. In effect, they provide valuable theoretical models from which radical educators can selectively draw in to develop an analysis of schools as sites of conflict actively involved in the production of lived experiences.

The work of Freire and Bakhtin points to the need to inquire into how human experiences are produced, contested, and legitimated within everyday classroom life. The theoretical importance of this analysis is linked directly to the need for radical educators to fashion a discourse in which a more comprehensive politics of culture, voice, and experience can be developed. At issue here is the recognition that schools are historical and structural embodiments of ideological forms of culture; they signify reality in ways that are often experienced differently and actively contested by various individuals and groups. Schools, in this sense, are ideological and political terrains out of which the dominant culture in part produces its hegemonic "certainties"; but they are also places where dominant and subordinate voices define and constrain each other, in battle and exchange, in response to the socio-historical conditions "carried" in the institutional, textual, and lived practices that define school culture and teacher/student experience. In other words, schools are not ideologically innocent; nor are they simply reproductive of dominant social relations and interests. At the same time, schools produce forms of political and moral regulation intimately connected with the technologies of power that "produce asymmetries in the abilities of individuals and groups to define and realize their needs" (Johnson, 1983, p. 11). More specifically, schools establish the conditions under which some individuals and groups define the terms by which others live, resist, affirm, and participate in the construction of their own identities and subjectivities. Simon (1987) illuminates quite well some of the important theoretical considerations that have to be addressed within a radical pedagogy. He is worth quoting at length on this issue:

Our concern as educators is to develop a way of thinking about the construction and definition of subjectivity within the concrete social forms of our everyday existence in a way that grasps schooling as a cultural and political site that [embodies] a project of regulation and transformation. As educators we are required to take a position on the acceptability of such forms. We also recognize that while schooling is productive it is not so in isolation, but in complex relations with other forms organized in other sites. . . . [Moreover,] in working to reconstruct aspects of schooling [educators should attempt] to understand how it becomes implicated in the production of subjectivities [and] recognize [how] existing social forms legitimate and produce real inequities which serve the interest of some over others and that a transformative pedagogy is oppositional in intent and is threatening to some in its practice. (pp. 176–177)

Simon rightly argues that as sites of cultural production schools embody representations and practices that construct as well as block the possibilities for human agency among students. This becomes clearer if

we recognize that one of the most important elements at work in the construction of experience and subjectivity in schools is language: language intersects with power just as particular linguistic forms structure and legitimate the ideologies of specific groups. Language is intimately related to power, and it constitutes the way that teachers and students define, mediate, and understand their relation to each other and the larger society.

As Bakhtin has pointed out, language is intimately related to the dynamics of authorship and voice.<sup>6</sup> It is within and through language that individuals in particular historical contexts shape values into particular forms and practices. As part of the production of meaning, language represents a central force in the struggle for voice. Schools are one of the primary public spheres where, through the influence of authority, resistance and dialogue, language is able to shape the way various individuals and groups encode and thereby engage the world. In other words, schools are places where language projects, imposes, and constructs particular norms and forms of meaning. In this sense, language does more than merely present "information"; in actuality, it is used as a basis both to "instruct" and to produce subjectivities. For Bakhtin, the issue of language is explored as part of a politics of struggle and representation, a politics forged in the relations of power pertaining to who decides and legislates the territory on which discourse is to be defined and negotiated. The driving momentum of voice and of authorship is inseparable from the relations between individuals and groups. In Bakhtin's terms, "the word is a two-sided act. It is determined . . . by those whose word it is and for whom it is meant. . . . A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor" (Volosinov [Bakhtin], 1973, pp. 85–86). At issue here is the critical insight that student subjectivities are developed across a range of discourses and can only be understood within a process of social interaction that "pumps energy from a life situation into the verbal discourse, . . . endow[ing] everything linguistically stable with living historical momentum and uniqueness" (Volosinov [Bakhtin], 1976, p. 106).

With the above theoretical assumptions in mind, I want now to argue in more specific terms for a radical pedagogy as a form of cultural politics. In effect, I want to present the case for constructing this pedagogy on a critically affirmative language that allows us to understand how subjectivities are produced; such a pedagogy makes problematic how teachers and students sustain, or resist, or accommodate those languages, ideologies, social processes, and myths that position them within existing relations of power and dependency. Moreover, this pedagogy points to the need to develop a theory of politics and culture that analyzes discourse and voice as a continually shifting balance of re-

sources and practices in the struggle over specific ways of naming, organizing, and experiencing social reality. Discourse can be recognized as a form of cultural production, linking agency and structure through public and private representations that are concretely organized and structured within schools. Furthermore, discourse is understood as a set of experiences that are lived and suffered by individuals and groups within specific contexts and settings. Within this perspective, the concept of experience is linked to the broader issue of how subjectivities are inscribed within cultural processes that develop with regard to the dynamics of production, transformation, and struggle. Understood in these terms, a pedagogy of cultural politics presents a two-fold set of tasks for radical educators. First, they need to analyze how cultural production is organized within asymmetrical relations of power in schools. Second, they need to construct political strategies for participating in social struggles designed to fight for schools as democratic public spheres.

In order to realize these tasks, it is necessary to assess the political limits and pedagogical potentialities of instances of cultural production that constitute the various processes of schooling. It is important to note that I am calling these social processes "instances of cultural production" rather than using the dominant leftist concept of reproduction. While the notion of reproduction points adequately to the various economic and political ideologies and interests that are reconstituted within the relations of schooling, it lacks a comprehensive, theoretical understanding of how such interests are mediated, worked on, and subjectively produced.

A radical pedagogy that assumes the form of a cultural politics must examine how cultural processes are produced and transformed within three particular, though related, fields of discourse. These are: *the discourse of production*, *the discourse of text analysis*, and *the discourse of lived cultures*. Each of these discourses has a history of theoretical development in various models of leftist analysis, and each has been subjected to intense discussion and criticism. These need not be repeated here.<sup>7</sup> What I want to do is to look at the potentialities exhibited by these discourses in their interconnections, particularly as they point to a new set of categories for developing educational practices that empower teachers and students to take up emancipatory interests.

### *Educational Practice and the Discourse of Production*

The discourse of production in educational theory has focused on the ways in which the structural forces outside the immediacy of school life construct the objective conditions within which schools function. This strategic framework can provide us with illuminating analyses of the

state, the workplace, foundations, publishing companies, and other embodiments of political interest that directly or indirectly influence school policy. Moreover, schools are understood within a larger network that allows us to analyze them as historical and social constructions, as embodiments of social forms that always bear a relationship to the wider society. A fundamental task of the discourse of production is to alert teachers to the primacy of identifying practices and interests that legitimate specific public representations and ways of life. To attempt to understand the process of schooling without taking into consideration how these wider forms of production are constructed, manifested, and contested both in and out of schools is inconceivable within this discourse. This becomes obvious, for instance, if we wish to analyze the ways in which state policy embodies and promotes particular practices that legitimate and render privileged some forms of knowledge over others, or some groups over others.<sup>8</sup> Equally significant would be an analysis of how dominant educational theory and practice are constructed, sustained, and circulated outside of schools. For instance, radical educators need to do more than identify the language and values of corporate ideologies as they are manifested in school curricula; they also need to analyze and transform the processes through which they are produced and circulated. Another important aspect of this approach is that it points to the way in which labor is objectively constructed; that is, it provides the basis for an analysis of the conditions under which educators work and the political importance of these conditions in both limiting and enabling pedagogical practice. This is especially important for analyzing the critical possibilities that exist for public school teachers and students to act and be treated as intellectuals, or, to put it in the words of C. W. Mills, as people who can get "in touch with the realities of themselves and their world" (1979, p. 370).

I would like to stress, however, that if teachers and students work in overcrowded conditions, lack time to work collectively in a creative fashion, or are shackled by rules that disempower them, then these conditions of labor have to be understood and addressed as part of the dynamics of reform and struggle (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). The discourse of production represents an important starting point for a pedagogy of cultural politics because it evaluates the relationship between schools and wider structural forces in light of a politics of human dignity—more specifically, a politics fashioned around the ways in which human dignity can be realized in public spheres designed to provide the material conditions for work, dialogue, and self- and social realization. Accordingly, these public spheres represent what Dewey, Mills, and others have called the conditions for freedom and praxis, political

embodiments of a social project that takes liberation as its major goal (see Dewey, 1984).

### *Radical Pedagogy and the Discourse of Textual Analysis*

Another important element in the development of a radical pedagogy, which I describe as the discourse of textual analysis, refers to any form of critique capable of analyzing cultural forms as they are produced and used in specific classrooms. The purpose of this approach is to provide teachers and students with the critical tools necessary to analyze those socially constructed representations and interests that organize particular readings of curriculum materials.

The discourse of textual analysis not only draws attention to the ideologies out of which texts are produced, but it also allows educators to distance themselves from the text in order to uncover the layers of meanings, contradictions, and differences inscribed in the form and content of classroom materials. The political and pedagogical importance of this form of analysis is that it opens the text to deconstruction, interrogating it as part of a wider process of cultural production; in addition, by making the text an object of intellectual inquiry, such an analysis posits the reader, not as a passive consumer, but as an active producer of meanings. In this view, the text is no longer endowed with an authorial essence waiting to be translated or discovered. On the contrary, the text becomes an ensemble of discourses constituted by a play of contradictory meanings, some of which are visibly privileged and some of which, in Macherey's terms, represent "a new discourse, the articulation of a silence" (1978, p. 6). Critical to this perspective are the notions of critique, production, and difference, all of which provide important elements for a counterhegemonic pedagogical practice. Belsey (1980) weaves these elements together in her critique of the classical realist text:

As an alternative it was possible to recognize it [classical realist text] as a construct and so to treat it as available for deconstruction, that is, the analysis of the process and conditions of its construction out of the available discourses. Ideology, masquerading as coherence and plenitude, is in reality inconsistent, limited, contradictory, and the realist text as a crystallization of ideology, participates in this incompleteness even while it diverts attention from the fact in the apparent plenitude of narrative closure. The object of deconstructing the text is to examine the process of its production—not the private experience of the individual author, but the mode of production, the materials and their arrangement in the work. The aim is

to locate the point of contradiction within the text, the point at which it transgresses the limits within which it is constructed, breaks free of the constraints imposed by its own realist form. Composed of contradictions, the text is no longer restricted to a single, harmonious and authoritative reading. Instead, it becomes plural, open to re-reading, no longer an object for passive consumption but an object of work by the reader to produce meaning. (p. 104)

This is a particularly important mode of analysis for radical educators because it argues against the idea that the means of representation in texts are merely neutral conveyors of ideas. Furthermore, such an approach points to the need for careful systematic analyses of the way in which material is used and ordered in school curricula and how its "signifiers" register particular ideological pressures and tendencies. Such an analysis allows teachers and students to deconstruct meanings that are silently built into the structuring principles of classroom meanings, thereby adding an important theoretical dimension to analyzing how the overt and hidden curricula work in schools.

At the day-to-day level of schooling, this type of textual criticism can be used to analyze how the technical conventions or images within various forms such as *narrative*, *mode of address*, and *ideological* reference attempt to construct a limited range of positions from which they are to be read. Richard Johnson (1983) is worth quoting on this point:

The legitimate object of an identification of "positions" is the pressures or tendencies on the reader, the theoretical problematic which produces subjective forms, the directions in which they move in their force—once inhabited. . . . If we add to this the argument that certain kinds of text ("realism") naturalise the means by which positioning is achieved, we have a dual insight of great force. The particular promise is to render processes hitherto unconsciously suffered (and enjoyed) open to explicit analysis. (pp. 64–65)

Coupled with traditional forms of ideology critique directed at the subject content of school materials, the discourse of text analysis also provides valuable insight into how subjectivities and cultural forms work within schools. The value of this kind of work has been exhibited in analyses which argue that the principles used in the construction of prepackaged curriculum materials utilize a mode of address that positions teachers as mere implementers of knowledge (Apple, 1983). This is clearly at odds with treating teachers and students as critical agents who play an active role in the pedagogical process. In one illuminating display of this approach, Judith Williamson (1978) has provided an extensive study of mass advertising. Similarly, Ariel Dorfman has applied this

mode of analysis to various texts in popular culture, including the portrayal of characters such as Donald Duck and Babar the Elephant. It is in his analysis of *Readers Digest* that Dorfman (1983) exhibits a dazzling display of the critical value of text analysis. In one example, he analyzes how *Readers Digest* uses a mode of representation that downplays the importance of viewing knowledge in its historical and dialectical connections. He writes:

Just as with superheroes, knowledge does not transform the reader; on the contrary, the more he [sic] reads the *Digest*, the less he needs to change. Here is where all that fragmentation returns to play the role it was always meant to play. Prior knowledge is never assumed. From month to month, the reader must purify himself, suffer from amnesia, bottle the knowledge he's acquired and put it on some out-of-the-way shelf so it doesn't interfere with the innocent pleasure of consuming more, all over again. What he learned about the Romans doesn't apply to the Etruscans. Hawaii has nothing to do with Polynesia. Knowledge is consumed for its effect, for "information renewal," for the interchange of banalities. It is useful only insofar as it can be digested anecdotally, but its potential for original sin has been washed clean along with the temptation to generate truth or movement—in other words: change.

Inherent in all of these positions is a call for modes of criticism that promote dialogue as the condition for social action: dialogue, in this case, rooted in a pedagogy informed by a number of assumptions drawn from the works of Bakhtin and Freire. These include: treating the text as a social construct that is produced out of a number of available discourses; locating the contradictions and gaps within an educational text and situating them historically in terms of the interests they sustain and legitimate; recognizing in the text its internal politics of style and how this both opens up and constrains particular representations of the social world; understanding how the text actively works to silence certain voices; and, finally, discovering how to release possibilities from the text that provide new insights and critical readings regarding human understanding and social practices.

I also want to argue that in order to develop a critical pedagogy as a form of cultural politics, it is essential to develop a mode of analysis that does not assume that lived experiences can be inferred automatically from structural determinations. In other words, the complexity of human behavior cannot be reduced to determinants in which such behavior is shaped and against which it constitutes itself, whether these be economic modes of production or systems of textual signification. The way in which individuals and groups both mediate and inhabit the cultural forms presented by such structural forces is in itself a form of pro-

duction, and needs to be analyzed through related but different modes of analyses. In order to develop this point, I want to present briefly the pedagogical implications of what I call the discourse of lived cultures.

### *Radical Pedagogy and the Discourse of Lived Cultures*

Central to this view is the need to develop what I have termed the theory of self-production (see Touraine, 1977). In the most general sense, this demands an understanding of how teachers and students give meaning to their lives through the complex historical, cultural, and political forms that they both embody and produce. A number of issues need to be developed within a critical pedagogy around this concern. First, it is necessary to acknowledge the subjective forms of political will and struggle that give meaning to the lives of students. Second, as a mode of critique, the discourse of lived cultures should interrogate the ways in which people create stories, memories, and narratives that posit a sense of determination and agency. This is the cultural "stuff" of mediation, the conscious and unconscious material through which members of dominant and subordinate groups offer accounts of who they are in their different readings of the world.

If radical educators treat the histories, experiences, and languages of different cultural groups as particularized forms of production, it becomes less difficult to understand the diverse readings, mediations, and behaviors that, let us say, students exhibit in response to analysis of a particular classroom text. In fact, a cultural politics necessitates that a pedagogy be developed that is attentive to the histories, dreams, and experiences that such students bring to school. It is only by beginning with these subjective forms that critical educators can develop a language and set of practices that engage the contradictory nature of the cultural capital with which students produce meanings that legitimate particular forms of life.

Searching out such elements of self-production is not merely a pedagogical technique for confirming the experiences of students who are silenced by the dominant culture of schooling. It is also part of an analysis of how power, dependence, and social inequality enable and limit students around issues of class, race, and gender. The discourse of lived cultures becomes an "interrogative framework" for teachers, illuminating not only how power and knowledge intersect to disconfirm the cultural capital of students from subordinate groups but also how they can be translated into a language of possibility. The discourse of lived cultures can also be used to develop a radical pedagogy of popular culture, one that engages the knowledge of lived experience through the dual

method of confirmation and interrogation. The knowledge of the "other" is engaged in this instance not simply to be celebrated but also to be interrogated with respect to the ideologies it contains, the means of representation it utilizes, and the underlying social practices it confirms. At issue here is the need to link knowledge and power theoretically so as to give students the opportunity to understand more critically who they are as part of a wider social formation and how they have been positioned and constituted through the social domain.

The discourse of lived cultures also points to the need for radical educators to view schools as cultural and political spheres actively engaged in the production and struggle for voice. In many cases, schools do not allow students from subordinate groups to authenticate their problems and experiences through their own individual and collective voices. As I have stressed previously, the dominant school culture generally represents and legitimates the privileged voices of the white middle and upper classes. In order for radical educators to demystify the dominant culture and to make it an object of political analysis, they will need to master the "language of critical understanding." If they are to understand the dominant ideology at work in schools, they will need to attend to the voices that emerge from three different ideological spheres and settings: these include *the school voice*, *the student voice*, and *the teacher voice*. The interests that these different voices represent have to be analyzed, not so much as oppositional in the sense that they work to counter and disable each other, but as an interplay of dominant and subordinate practices that shape each other in an ongoing struggle over power, meaning, and authorship. This, in turn, presupposes the necessity for analyzing schools in their historical and relational specificity, and it points to the possibility for intervening and shaping school outcomes. In order to understand the multiple and varied meanings that constitute the discourses of student voice, radical educators need to affirm and critically engage the polyphonic languages their students bring to schools. Educators need to learn "the collection and communicative practices associated with particular uses of both written and spoken forms among specific groups" (Sola & Bennett, 1985, p. 89). Moreover, any adequate understanding of this language has to encompass the social and community relations outside of school life that give it meaning and dignity.

Learning the discourse of school voice means that radical educators need to critically analyze the directives, imperatives, and rules that shape particular configurations of time, space, and curricula within the institutional and political settings of schools. The category of school voice, for example, points to sets of practices and ideologies that structure how classrooms are arranged, what content is taught, what general

social practices teachers have to follow. Moreover, it is in the interplay between the dominant school culture and the polyphonic representations and layers of meaning of student voice that dominant and oppositional ideologies define and constrain each other.

Teacher voice reflects the values, ideologies, and structuring principles that give meaning to the histories, cultures, and subjectivities that define the day-to-day activities of educators. It is the critical voice of common sense that teachers utilize to mediate between the discourses of production, of texts, and of lived cultures as expressed within the asymmetrical relations of power characterizing such potentially "counterpublic" spheres as schools. In effect, it is through the mediation and action of teacher voice that the very nature of the schooling process is either sustained or challenged; that is, the power of teacher voice to shape schooling according to the logic of emancipatory interests is inextricably related to a high degree of self-understanding regarding values and interests. Teacher voice moves within a contradiction that points to its pedagogical significance for marginalizing as well as empowering students. On the one hand, teacher voice represents a basis in authority that can provide knowledge and forms of self-understanding allowing students to develop the power of critical consciousness. At the same time, regardless of how politically or ideologically correct a teacher may be, his or her "voice" can be destructive for students if it is imposed on them or if it is used to silence them.

Kathleen Weiler (1988), in her brilliant ethnography of a group of feminist school administrators and teachers, illustrates this issue. She reports on one class in which a feminist teacher has read a selection from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* describing how a young Malcolm is told by one of his public school teachers that the most he can hope for in life is to get a job working with his hands. In reading this story, the teacher's aim is to illustrate a particular theory of socialization. John, a black student in the class, reads the selection as an example of outright racism, one that he fully understands in light of his own experiences. He isn't interested in looking at the more abstract issue of socialization. For him, the issue is naming a racist experience and condemning it forcefully. Molly, the teacher, sees John's questions as disruptive and chooses to ignore him. In response to her action, John drops out of the class the next day. Defending her position, Molly argues that students must learn how the process of socialization works, especially if they are to understand fundamental concepts in sociology. But in teaching this point, she has failed to understand that students inhabit multilayered subjectivities which often promote contradictory and diverse voices and as such present different, if not oppositional, readings of the materials provided in class, in spite of their alleged worth. In this case, the culture of the

teacher's voice, which is white and middle class, comes into conflict with that of the student voice, which is black and working class. Rather than mediating this conflict in a pedagogically progressive way, the teacher allowed her voice and authority to silence the student's anger, concern, and interests.

I also want to add that the category of teacher voice points to the need for radical educators to join together in a wider social movement dedicated to restructuring the ideological and material conditions that work both within and outside of schooling. The notion of voice in this case points to a shared tradition as well as a particular form of discourse. It is a tradition that has to organize around the issues of solidarity, struggle, and empowerment in order to provide the conditions for the particularities of teacher and student voice to gain the most emancipatory expression. Thus, the category of teacher voice needs to be understood in terms of its collective political project as well as in relation to the ways it functions to mediate student voices and everyday school life.

In general terms, the discourse of critical understanding not only represents an acknowledgement of the political and pedagogical processes at work in the construction of forms of authorship and voice within different institutional and social spheres; it also constitutes a critical attack on the vertical ordering of reality inherent in the unjust practices that are actively at work in the wider society. To redress some of the problems sketched out in the preceding pages, I believe that schools need to be reconceived and reconstituted as "democratic counterpublic spheres"—as places where students learn the skills and knowledge needed to live in and fight for a viable democratic society. Within this perspective, schools will have to be characterized by a pedagogy that demonstrates its commitment to engaging the views and problems that deeply concern students in their everyday lives. Equally important is the need for schools to cultivate a spirit of critique and a respect for human dignity that will be capable of linking personal and social issues around the pedagogical project of helping students to become active citizens.

In conclusion, each of the three major discourses presented above as part of a radical pedagogy involves a different view of cultural production, pedagogical analysis, and political action. And while each of these radical discourses involves a certain degree of autonomy in both form and content, it is important that a radical pedagogy be developed around the inner connections they share within the context of a cultural politics. For it is within these interconnections that a critical theory of structure and agency can be developed—a theory that engenders a radical educational language capable of asking new questions, making new commitments, and allowing educators to work and organize for the development of schools as democratic counterpublic spheres.

## Notes

1. This position has a long history in American public education and is reviewed in Raymond Callahan, *The Cult of Efficiency* (1962); Joel Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate Order* (1972); and Henry A. Giroux, "Public Philosophy and the Crisis in Education" (1984).

2. The most celebrated example of this position can be found in Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976). The literature on schooling and the reproductive thesis is critically reviewed in Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education Under Siege* (1985).

3. I want to make clear that there is a major distinction between the work of John Dewey, especially *Democracy and Education* (1916), and the hybrid discourses of progressive, educational reform that characterized the late 1960s and 1970s in the United States. The discourse of relevance and integration that I am analyzing here bears little resemblance to Dewey's philosophy of experience in that Dewey stressed the relationships among student experience, critical reflection, and learning. In contrast, the call for relevance that has characterized progressive education generally surrenders the concept of systematic knowledge acquisition to an anti-intellectual concept of student experience.

4. For a recent analysis of school tracking, see Jeannie Oakes, *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* (1985). See also, Henry A. Giroux and David Purpel, *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education* (1983).

5. The works from which I will be drawing for both authors include: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973), *The Politics of Education* (1985); and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1984a), *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984b), V. N. Volosinov (M. M. Bakhtin) *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973); and Freudianism: *A Marxist Critique* (1976).

6. See Ann Shukman (Ed.), *Bakhtin's School Papers* (1983); V. N. Volosinov (M. M. Bakhtin), *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973).

7. A major analysis of these discourses and the traditions with which they are generally associated can be found in Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" (1983).

8. Examples of this discourse can be found in Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State* (1985).

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## 6

## *Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism*

### **Border Pedagogy as a Counter-Text**

Border pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and languages. This means educating students not only to read these codes critically but also to learn the limits of such codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives and histories. Partiality becomes, in this case, the basis for recognizing the limits built into all discourses and necessitates taking a critical view of authority. Within this discourse, a student must engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power (Hicks, 1988). These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into borders of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize them become destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history, and power.

Within critical social theory, it has become commonplace to argue that knowledge and power are related, though the weight of the argument has often overemphasized how domination works through the intricacies of this relationship (Foucault, 1977b). Border pedagogy offers a crucial theoretical and political corrective to this insight. It does so by shifting the emphasis of the knowledge/power relationship away from the limited emphasis on the mapping of domination to the politically strategic issue of engaging the ways in which knowledge can be remapped, reterritorialized, and decentered in the wider interests of rewriting the borders and coordinates of an oppositional cultural politics. This is not an abandonment of critique as much as it is an extension