Introduction

The essays in this volume bring together disparate voices of critique. We hope they will challenge readers to see educational issues in new ways, to explore not only the workings of power and culture in schools as they now exist, but also to engage in educational practice to create better schools for the future. In a society dominated by individualism and narrow forms of rationality that serve to mask and justify inequalities, the political and social critiques of those who have been excluded and who are now speaking their own truths is vital in encouraging resistance and change. These essays raise a multiplicity of voices and debates about where we are, why we are here, and the kind of futures we can struggle to achieve. Education in the United States since the nineteenth century has been marked by periodic panics over questions of national identity and purpose. In times of crisis, reformers and critics have turned to the presumed inadequacy of education as the source of social and political ills. Incompetent teachers, inappropriate curricula, unwieldy bureaucracies, and racially or culturally 'deprived' students have all been blamed for each period's perceived weaknesses in political, economic, or cultural spheres. In the past decade, this tendency to blame education for national decline has, if anything, increased. Through official reports, national studies, and popular polemics, a conservative rhetoric about the 'crisis in the schools' has come to dominate contemporary discourse about education. Schools and teachers have been blamed for the declining economic health of the nation, for continued unemployment, crime, and a perceived decline in 'moral standards' among the young. At the same time, there is a marked retreat from a commitment to education as a civil and moral right for all children and an acceptance and even encouragement of what is in effect a two-tiered system of education in this country. This attitude of both blame and neglect of public education has been accompanied in the early 1990s by a conservative campaign to silence critical voices and demand conformity to the authoritative writings of a canon of 'the Western tradition.' Education may indeed be in crisis, but it is a crisis over resources, power, and voice. The authors of this volume, who are loosely associated with what has come to be known as "critical

pedagogy," address these questions from a stance of both critique and visionary hope.

Critical pedagogy links education with an analysis of politics and economics, and takes as central the belief that schools are places where social analysis and the empowerment of students can take place. Their work continues a long critical tradition in U.S. education. In the early decades of the twentieth century, social philosophers such as John Dewey, W.E.B. DuBois, and George Counts presented a vision of education as the means for individual growth and for social change. In the late 1960s, critics began to develop an analysis of education in the United States that carried on the radical tradition of such earlier figures as Dewey, DuBois, and Counts. While this critical tradition echoed the approach of these figures, it was also deeply influenced by the development of critical social analysis in other areas. With the growth of social movements in the 1960s, critiques of various aspects of U.S. society emerged: legal and institutional racism was challenged by the African-American-led-civil rights movement; patriarchal practices and sexism were critiqued by the women's liberation movement; the role of the United States in a world system of imperialism and neo-colonialism was called into question by the movement against the Vietnam war and by the introduction of political and social criticism from Latin America, Asia, and Africa; the inequities of the class divisions within the United States were analyzed by a number of neo-Marxist theorists. By the late 1960s, this broad range of critical analysis was influencing teachers and theorists to begin to examine education and schools. A number of first-person accounts of public schools by such writers as Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, and James Herndon exposed the racist practices and unequal structure of urban schools. At the university level, analyses of the role of leading universities in providing ideological justifications for the actions of the government emerged from the anti-war movement. And fundamental challenges to traditional curricula and dominant institutions were mounted by African-Americans, feminists, and a variety of other unrepresented groups. It was in the context of these multifaceted critiques of the dominant social system that a more fully developed critical theory of education emerged in the mid-1970s.

The critical studies of education that emerged in the 1970s were dominated by reproduction studies of schooling, which argued that schools served the primary role of reproducing an unequal and oppressive social system under capitalism. Studies of education in the United States such as Bowles and Gintis's *Schooling in Capitalist*

America, and European works such as Basil Bernstein's *Class Codes and Control* and Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Society, Education and Culture* made the argument that schools, through their organization of space and time, their choice of curricular knowledge, and their valuation of dominant forms of language and culture, were institutions that both justified and maintained class boundaries. Schools thus were seen to teach a 'hidden curriculum' of social control. In Althusser's terms, they were "ideological state apparatuses" which functioned to reproduce the status quo. By the late 1970s, a new group of theorists had emerged who focused on students' resistance to these dominant forces. These studies asserted that students' own actions had to be considered in theorizing the role of schools in capitalist societies. Most influential of these analyses of resistance was no doubt Willis's study of British working-class boys, *Learning to Labour.* Thus, from an early concern with the 'hidden curriculum' and the role of schools in reproducing oppressive social relationships, critical educators moved to consider the possibilities of student resistance and curriculum transformation. These studies led to increasingly sophisticated and complex forms of analysis. Gramsci's formulation of hegemony and the possibility of what he called "good sense" or critical understanding on the part of social actors provided the foundation for a vision of education as both active and political. At the level of radical practice, the work of Paulo Freire inspired teachers and students to seek ways of teaching for social transformation and liberation. By the late 1980s, the term critical pedagogy came to be applied to the work of a number of theorists in the United States working from this complex intellectual tradition.

The term 'critical pedagogy,' like other labels, implies a more static and bounded category than is in fact the case. As the articles in this volume will attest, a wide range of perspectives has come to be included under the broad rubric of critical pedagogy, but all of the work described as critical pedagogy shares a stance of critique and an interpretation of pedagogy in its wider sense as including curriculum, social relationships in the classroom, and the ways in which the classroom reflects the larger social context. Recently the concerns of theorists associated with critical pedagogy have broadened, reflecting the intellectual ferment in the 1990s and, in particular, the development of more complex feminist, postmodernist, and postcolonial theory. Although there had been debates and conflicts among the theorists of critical pedagogy over questions of interpretation and practice, the theorists of the 1970s and early 1980s shared an underlying set of assumptions or paradigms grounded in traditional

Marxist and neo-Marxist thought. This led them to frame their analyses in terms of class and class reproduction or resistance. With the growth of educational theory written by feminists and people of color, these theorists' predominant focus on class came under increasing criticism. White male theorists associated with critical pedagogy were called upon to address the implications of their own positions of privilege in gender, race, or class terms and to consider the ways in which they also implicitly made privileged and universal claims. This critique of critical pedagogy as a form of discursive practice and system of truth echoed various forms of postmodernist analysis, particularly the work of Foucault. Postcolonial and postmodernist theory and the critiques by feminists and people of color have called into question claims to a unitary and transcendent truth that underlay earlier critical studies in education. Feminists and people of color in particular challenged the exclusive focus on class in analyses of the social relations of schooling or dominant forms of knowledge. These feminist, postcolonial, and postmodernist challenges have led critical educational theorists to reexamine their own assumptions and the ways their own thought could be examined as discursive practice. These challenges have led to tensions and conflicts within critical pedagogy, but at the same time they have led to a rich interchange and revitalization of the ways in which power is conceptualized as operating in schools and curricula, and in particular a much more complex understanding of the ways in which students and teachers are both subjected to and subjects of what we call education.

All of the essays in this collection appeared first in the *Journal of Education,* a journal which has provided an important venue for critical studies in education in this decade. The *Journal of Education,* published through the School of Education at Boston University, is the oldest continuous educational journal in the United States. Throughout its history, it has reflected important trends in educational research and theory. Its present concern with critical pedagogy, however, dates from the late 1970s, when Henry Giroux joined the faculty of the School of Education at Boston University. In Giroux's six years at Boston University, he encouraged critical research and scholarship among his graduate students, was central in bringing leading educational theorists to speak at Boston University, and was instrumental in encouraging the editorial board of the *Journal* to consider publishing special issues from a critical perspective. In 1980, Giroux edited a special issue of the *Journal* on the hidden curriculum. In the early 1980s, the *Journal* published

special issues on topics such as literacy and ideology, schooling and work, and gender and class. Giroux's position at Boston University ended in 1983, when his application for tenure, which had been unanimously supported by the School of Education and the All University Wide Tenure Committee, was denied by Boston University president John Silber. Giroux's career at Boston University itself is a reminder that all intellectual work is political and that struggles over ideas are also material struggles. Although Giroux was forced to leave Boston University, the *Journal* has continued to act as a forum for critical pedagogy.

In selecting these essays from the *Journal,* we have been guided by a principle of including a variety of perspectives—including feminism, cultural politics, and discourse—to explore the theoretical bases and practical implications of a critical approach. While all of these essays can be included under a broad umbrella of critical pedagogy, in the sense that they examine existing structures critically and challenge dominant assumptions about education and schooling in the United States, they present a wide range of concerns and perspectives. Most of them are critical of the early exclusive focus on schools as means of class reproduction. Rather, they focus on the ways in which schools and curricula have reproduced racist ideology and assumptions, the ways in which patriarchal assumptions have defined both school practices and research in education, and the openings that exist for teachers to use students' own cultural worlds as the source for an oppositional pedagogy. At the same time, they build upon the earlier critical studies of education of the 1970s and, in particular, reflect the continued influence of the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Many of these essays are also deeply influenced by post-modernist social theory as well as by feminism or antiracist theory. Of course, the term *postmodernism* itself is highly contested and has been applied in a variety of ways to developments in architecture, literary criticism, philosophy, and popular culture. Postmodernism in the broadest sense can be seen as a movement in Western thought and art that challenges the idea of universal truths or "master narratives," as they are sometimes called. But as Hal Foster points out, there is a basic contradiction between what he calls "a postmodernism of reaction" and "a postmodernism of resistance."[1] It is this sense of postmodernist critique as "resistance" to accepted truths and unitary dominant versions of social reality that underlies many of these essays. In this sense, these essays provide a critique not only of dominant forms of analysis or accepted truths, but of the early tradition of critical educational theory itself. We have selected

what we feel to be representative essays organized around two themes: theorizing power/knowledge and pedagogies of possibility. By moving from theoretical analyses to examples of curriculum transformation and classroom practice, we hope to provide both a foundation for the analysis of schooling and also alternatives for teaching practice in the direction of democracy and social justice. The organization of this volume reflects this dual focus on critical pedagogy as critique and as work for social change.

The first section, "Theorizing Power/Knowledge," presents essays that provide a theoretical analysis of the workings of power through school practices and knowledge. In many ways the guiding principle underlying all of these essays is set out by Henry Giroux in "The Hope of Radical Education." As Giroux makes clear, radical or critical educational theory begins with the need to question accepted truths and assumptions about education and society. This leads to the stance of critique and a concern with the underlying social and historical processes at work in any educational encounter or school site. But he also makes clear that implicit in the idea of a critical approach is a commitment and a belief that society is a historical construction that is in process, that has changed over time, and that can be changed in the future. In her essay, "A Feminist Perspective on the Relationship Between Family Life and School Life," Madeleine Arnot presents a feminist critique of the British critical sociology of education of the 1970s and early 1980s. She points out that this work, although important in exposing the inequities and implication of state schooling in reproducing class inequities, was deeply flawed by its failure to address issues of gender. Not only were most studies of schooling by critical sociologists of education in Great Britain during this period exclusively focused on boys, but they also ignored the role of the family. While studies focused on the role of schools in reproducing (male) workers, these same studies failed to address the role of schools in reproducing patriarchal family structures, structures which in a shrinking economy assume a dual workload for women as workers in low paid jobs and full-time workers in the home and in child care.

Arnot's critique of critical sociology of education uses its own tradition of political economy to demonstrate the shortcomings of an analysis that fails to address gender. But the terminology and approach she uses echo traditional critical methods and assumptions. The next two essays, Laurie McDade's "Sex, Pregnancy and Schooling: Obstacles to a Critical Teaching of the Body," and Linda Brodkey and Michelle Fine's "Presence of Mind in Absence of Body,"

use the language and approach of both postmodernist and feminist theory to examine the ways in which power operates in school discourse and in teachers' and students' consciousness as embodied subjects. Both of these essays seek to unravel the silences and materiality of ideology in the way school knowledge separates "mind" from the reality we experience in our bodies. McDade considers the political and ideological struggles around a program for pregnant teenage girls. She argues that this case illuminates the ways in which power operates in schools and the ways in which knowledge of and through the body is denied by dominant school practices. In her description of the effects of a political decision to eliminate this program for pregnant teenage girls, she shows the ways in which struggles over curricula and school organization do symbolic and material violence to those who are oppressed—in this case predominantly poor black and Puerto Rican girls, women of color who are the most oppressed group in U.S. society. In a study of responses to a sexual harassment survey at the University of Pennsylvania, Brodkey and Fine echo one of the themes of McDade's essay, the ways in which knowledge of and through the body is denied—in this case by the victims of sexual harassment themselves. Through an analysis of the written responses to this survey as narratives, Brodkey and Fine uncover the silences and absences in these texts. As they point out, by defining themselves wholly as "mind," these women, who were sexually harassed, managed to take a viewpoint of observer to their own bodies, but with damaging effects on their own ability to study and teach. In all three of these essays, the specific experiences of women and the ways in which patriarchal assumptions are incorporated into consciousness become the basis for critique of the dominant views of what it means for women and girls to be educated and to teach.

The next three essays share similar approaches to the analysis of classroom knowledge. Cleo Cherryholmes uses Foucault's conception of discursive practices to uncover the structuring principles of knowledge in social studies education. Cherryholmes argues that it is important to become self-conscious about the ways in which discursive practices shape and limit what is permissible for us to say. By becoming more conscious of the ways in which discourse operates, we can begin to see the underlying principles and assumptions that structure discourse, and can be clearer about the ways in which we can act to achieve our own goals as teachers. Cameron McCarthy uses a similar analysis of discourse to consider the ways in which the concept of multiculturalism has been appropriated in textbooks and

curricula. He argues that much of what is presented as multicultural education is in fact simply the addition of fragmentary images or stories of 'the other' to the margins of the dominant Western narrative which organizes knowledge in textbooks and other curricular materials. McCarthy argues that 'Western-ness' as the dominant organizing principle of knowledge is itself a deeply politicized concept emerging from struggles over power and resources. Instead he argues for what he calls an "emancipatory multiculturalism" which would emphasize multivocality in the construction of curricula. A similar critique of dominant ideas of what constitutes culture and the conception of Western values and knowledge is presented by Thomas Popkewitz in his essay, "Culture, Pedagogy, and Power: Issues in the Production of Values and Colonialization." Popkewitz examines the Museum of Modern Art exhibit on modernism and a Teacher Corps project in three rural Native American communities to consider the ways in which the normative definition of what is "our" culture is itself socially constructed within fields of discursive practices. Like McCarthy, Popkewitz points to the centrality of conceptions of a normative identity or culture and the idea of the 'others,' who can be objects of study or who can be given some marginal space on the edges of the dominant narrative. And, echoing most of the essays in this section, Popkewitz calls for an interrogation and deconstruction of the discursive practices that organize and categorize experience to reflect and reinforce relationships of power.

In the second section, we turn to essays that explore the theme 'pedagogies of possibility.' These essays include accounts of classroom practices, analyses of conflicting forms of classroom discourse, and alternative forms of practice. They consider the ways in which teachers and students come to class as situated subjects with specific histories, experiences of dominance or subordination, and have available to them forms of knowledge (popular culture, for example), and different subject positions that work in complex ways as resistance or accommodation. In the first essay in this section, Deborah Britzman uses the experiences of student teachers to explore the possibilities inherent in the pedagogical encounter for cultural critique and new discursive practices. She argues that the unexpected, what she calls "the uncanny" in teaching is precisely what should be embraced in conscious opposition to pedagogies that "manage techniques, discipline bodies, and control outcomes." Her discussion of one example of student resistance that expresses and plays upon deep-seated racism, violent sexism, and fascism raises significant questions about what critical pedagogy can mean and how it may be

framed. As Britzman argues, it is not enough to present what we feel is progressive curriculum; critical teachers must also understand and explore the ways in which their students (and they themselves) are historically constructed within an oppressive and unequal society and speak through the forms of discourse available to them. But, she argues, a recognition of these complexities is vital as critical teachers attempt to put their ideas into practice. The second essay in this section, "African-American Teachers and the Politics of Race," by Michèle Foster, provides an example of the contradictions and problems faced by African-American teachers in the context of desegregation. As Foster argues, these teachers attempted to "fashion a pedagogy designed to counteract oppression and foster empowerment" in the face of racist laws and practices. By giving voice to these teachers, Foster demonstrates that although dismantling legally segregated schools after Brown v. Board of Education was essential, it was not enough and that racist practices continue to shape schooling in the United States. She argues that it is imperative to attack structural inequalities and to recognize and combat racism in school practices and organization. Like Britzman, then, Foster argues for the need to understand and analyze the barriers to equality as the first step to building pedagogies of possibility.

The next three essays in this section—Maxine Greene's "The Art of Being Present," Henry Giroux and Roger Simon's "Schooling, Popular Culture, and a Pedagogy of Possibility," and Marilyn Frankenstein's "Critical Mathematics Education"—suggest ways of intervening in schools to build pedagogies of possibility. In "The Art of Being Present," Greene argues that teachers should consciously seek aesthetic encounters in their teaching in which "preferences are released, uncertainties confronted, desires given voice." Echoing Britzman's argument that critical teachers should take seriously the role of the imagination and of the unexpected, Greene argues that art and literature provide ways of presenting a multiplicity of voices and of challenging accepted and conventional truths. These themes are continued in Giroux and Simon's "Schooling, Popular Culture, and a Pedagogy of Possibility." Giroux and Simon argue that popular culture provides a significant site for the creation of a critical pedagogy. By taking popular culture as a serious subject for critical analysis and study, Giroux and Simon argue that teachers can acknowledge students' own knowledge and meaning making and thus validate students' own situated subject positions and voices. In opening up popular culture as an area of serious study, Giroux and Simon do not propose a simple celebration of mass culture. Instead

they intend both to validate students' engagement in discourse and to call existing truths into question. In "Critical Mathematics Education," Frankenstein uses Paulo Friere's epistemology to consider the ways in which mathematics can be studied in a critical fashion. As she argues, statistics and mathematical "truths" are often used to support and justify existing inequities. By discussing mathematics as a form of human knowledge that is historically constructed and within the reach of students, Frankenstein seeks both to demystify mathematics and to encourage students to understand its present uses and potential for emancipatory change.

In the last essay in this collection, "Writing Pedagogy: A Dialogue of Hope," Anne-Louise Brookes and Ursula Kelly present their mutual exploration of what critical pedagogy has meant to them as teacher-educators. In an exchange of letters, they reflect upon the ways in which critical pedagogy, as expressed in essays like the ones in this collection, sheds light upon their own work as critical teachers. As they attempt to put these ideas into practice, they come to see how difficult and complex it is to move from a theoretical understanding of the world to action in the world. While they see shortcomings in some of the works of critical theorists, they also find support for their own commitment to continue to work for change. It is our hope, reader, that although you will doubtless disagree and argue with various views and claims put forth here, this collection will provide a similar challenge and support for you.

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Note

1. Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Modern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983) p. xi.