Critical Pedagogy

MAKING CRITICAL THINKING *REALLY* CRITICAL

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Critical thinking is now part of the official discourse in education. However, the phrase *critical thinking* is not understood in the same way by all those who use it. In this paper, I will argue that different interpretations of critical thinking represent different positions with respect to valued forms of knowledge and the socio-political interests that they reflect and support. My intention is to sensitize the reader to the fact that the way in which we perceive our reality determines the value of our inquiry and thought processes and, consequently, the kinds of questions we ask, the problems we pose, and the solutions we seek. From this statement, it follows that the way in which we interpret critical thinking determines the kinds of problems we think "critically" about, the forms of "critical thinking" we use, and the "critical" solutions we find.

This paper has two main premises. The first premise is that we live in a socially constructed "reality" which limits and distorts 'the way we perceive and think about problems. This "reality" is perpetuated at several educational levels (i.e., schools and universities; teacher education programs; educational research programs; administrative and executive agencies of educational policy; and textbooks, scholarly journals, and other educational materials). The second premise is that, because educators are embedded in a particular social reality, what we perceive as critical thinking is reduced to a repertoire of skills often uncritical, custodial, and unproblematic. In this sense, critical thinking has little connection to the context of students' lives and no concern with social justice. Under these circumstances, it is little wonder that students are apathetic and anxious about learning and aloof to social unjustness.

Finally, I will contend that making critical thinking be **really** critical means to include as its ultimate goals the achievement of students' emancipation and the implementation of committed action for social justice. As such, emancipatory critical thinking must be entrenched within a broader critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a theoretical/practical approach to (a) studying social relations and practices, (b) raising

students' awareness about the unjust and contradictory values and conditions in our society, and (c) providing students with the necessary tools and courage to creating a better society for all.

DEFINING SOCIAL UNJUSTNESS

When I refer to social unjustness, I do so in a large sense to encompass problems that affect humankind both at the global (worldwide) and the local (in the United States) levels. Globally, we are confronted with awesome problems such as **overpopulation** (the present world's population is 5 billion, and will double in 45 years); **famine** (affecting 1/3 of the world's population); **pandemics** (e.g., AIDS is growing at exponential rates and is already affecting 8,000,000 adults world wide and more than one million people in the United States); **deforestation** (e.g., the rain forests in South America, India, and Indonesia — among others — are being destroyed at the alarming rates of 13,820; 10,000; and 10,000) square kilometers respectively every year); **depletion of natural resources** (e.g., at the present rates of oil use, China's reserves of natural gas will last only 9 years and those of the U.S.A., 7 years); **drastic declines in animal species** (e.g., three fourths of the world's bird species are declining or threatened with extinction, one hundred species of invertebrates are lost every day due to deforestation alone); dangerous levels of **environmental pollution** of our land, sea, and air (e.g., in 1989, the Panguna copper mine in Papua New Guinea dumped 600,000,000 tons of metal contaminated tailings into the Kawerong River; at the current pollution rates, it is predicted that the Mediterranean Sea will be a dead sea in 40 years); **war and violence** (e.g., just between the years 1820 and 1945 alone, 59,000,000 human beings were killed) (Brown et al., 1992; Kornblum & Julian, 1989).

The problems we are confronted with in the United States are also of enormous proportions. To name a few: While "our" **military budget** for 1986 was $290 billion, it is estimated that 3 million Americans were (and are) **homeless**; 35 million Americans live below the **poverty** line; only 1/3 of unemployed receive **unemployment** benefits. Likewise, the **gap between the rich and the poor** is rapidly increasing (e.g., in the last few years, the income for the 20% poorest families decreased 5% whereas that of the wealthiest 1% increased 87%; the 20% richest Americans own 67% of U.S.A. wealth while 40% of the poorest Americans own less than 3%). Other problems are: **gender discrimination** (e.g., women are paid 20% less than men for equivalent jobs); **racism** (e.g., K.K.K. rallies are on the rise in many states of the union); **crime** (e.g., America's **prison population** is 4 and 10 times higher than in U.K. and Japan, respectively); a **deficient health care** system (e.g., the U.S is the only "developed" country without socialized medicine); **drugs and alcohol** (e.g., American drinkers outnumber abstainers by 3 to 1) (Kornblum & Julian, 1989; Sage, 1990).

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the existing global and local problems, the majority of people (including teachers of critical thinking) are amazingly unconcerned. Why do we remain so aloof, or worse yet, powerless when confronted with social unjustness? Why is critical thinking not contributing to the creation of a more just society? To answer these questions, we must (a) view critical thinking in a problematic way relating its purposes to different types of human interests and (b) understand two important concepts: Social construction of reality and hegemonic ideology.

CRITICAL THINKING AS A PROBLEM

How we go about defining critical thinking is crucial to any attempt to understand it. By viewing critical thinking as a problem, by considering it as controversial, we may be able to extract new meanings and open up new possibilities. In order to "problematize" critical thinking, I will examine both its mainstream and alternative discourses — rules, either tacit or explicit that guide its uses and interpretations.

To problematize critical thinking is to make it a topic for inquiry so that we can investigate it and dialogue about its principles, foundations, and purposes in a way that links them to the socio-political sphere. This way we can view critical thinking in a different light and notice its implications for human interests. To initiate the "problematization" of critical thinking, let us take an example of this term's mainstream definition. Kurfiss (1988) defined critical thinking as "an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that

integrates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified" (p.2). This definition, in itself, is apparently neutral and common sense. Yet, if we problematize it, if we ask questions about the language used, the possible connotations implicit in this definition, and the issues that are left out of it, we will realize how a taken-for-granted interpretation may be deceptive. This will become evident if we ask: What kinds of phenomena, situations, questions, or problems are alluded to in this definition which are to be "critically" thought about? Who determines what phenomena, situations, questions, or problems need to be "critically" examined? Who would benefit (or lose out) from examining these particular phenomena situations, questions, or problems instead of examining other sets of phenomena, situations, questions, or problems? When we talk about "available information," whose "information" are we referring to? What types of "information" are we speaking about? When we say that a particular phenomenon is being "convincingly justified," according to whose viewpoint or standard would it be "convincing" or "justified"? What would happen if such phenomenon were not "convincing" or "justified" for those supposed to be convinced or justified to?

As you can see, the term "critical thinking" does not have a simple meaning. Its definition can be distorted and interpreted in many different ways depending on how we construct knowledge. Therefore, it is important to consider the purposes and the human interests that are being served by defining critical thinking in one way or another.

PURPOSES OF CRITICAL THINKING IN RELATION TO HUMAN INTERESTS

Knowledge construction is always based on the needs and interests of humans; moreover, these interests and needs are shaped by particular social and historical conditions and circumstances. According to Habermas (1972), knowledge is organized by virtue of three types of human interests: (a) technical, (b) practical, and (c) emancipatory. The first type, technical interests, refers to those interests that humans have which will prompt them to acquire knowledge. In turn, this knowledge will enable them to gain control over natural objects and master skills necessary in the modern technological world. The kind of knowledge that such interests facilitate is instrumental knowledge in the form of scientific explanations. The second type of human interests, the practical, is served by interpretative knowledge. In this regard interpretative knowledge allows people to do just that, "interpret" their environment in order to adjust to it and modify it according to the needs of that moment. However, most interpretations are subject to the constraints imposed by social and cultural biases. The third type, human emancipatory interests, goes beyond technical and practical understanding and is concerned with "struggle for freedom" (Gibson, 1986, p. 37).

The majority of the mainstream interpretations and definitions of critical thinking take place within the first two contexts of human interests, the technical and/or the practical, and exclude the sphere of emancipatory interests. When we talk about critical thinking, we refer "primarily to teaching students how to analyze and develop reading and writing assignments from the perspective of formal, logical patterns of consistency" based on the positivistic tradition (Giroux, 1988a, p. 62). From this perspective, critical thinking is commonly aimed at improving existing practices or developing new ones without problematizing existing values and beliefs and examining the political and moral implications of doing so. For the most part, actual conceptualizations of critical thinking are based on a specific type of knowledge, legitimate knowledge of "that," "how," and "to" which reflects a technological perspective and is based on identifiable norms to be accepted in the occupational and social settings (Dreeben, 1968). While this type of knowledge is important, its limitations lie in what is excluded: human interests and social consequences.

With few exceptions (e.g., Guyton 1982, 1984; Hostetler, 1991), the prevailing pedagogical interpretations over what constitutes critical thinking (in both general and specific forms) are viewed as value free and objective and are based on an undialectical approach. In the process, these interpretations, while universalizing the dominant norms, values, and knowledge, exclude those of dominated groups and reproduce social relations of injustice. Furthermore, these interpretations reduce responsible participation of learners in highly significant ways: "in determining what they need to learn; in inventing and testing ways

to pursue their chosen learning goals effectively; in managing the behavioral conditions of learning — motivational, affective, and emotional states, and power and authority relations — as these contribute or thwart learning; and in developing and using criteria to evaluate learning outcomes and processes" (Benne, 1990, p 68). Consequently, learners are oppressed by these interpretations. Under these circumstances, it is little wonder that students are afraid or unable to think critically and participate in the political arena (Freire, 1973, 1985). Teachers are affected by such conceptualization of critical thinking, too. As Eisner (1990) points out: "If American educators have something to worry about, it is the national fear of exercising judgment coupled with our political apathy" (p. 525).

This is why, in my opinion, an alternative way of defining critical thinking must be considered. Such an alternative way must be concerned with emancipation and justice. This form of critical thinking, *emancipatory critical thinking,* is rooted in community; examines "the social norms, in particular the ethical norms, present implicitly or implicitly in the language, traditions, and institutions of a society" (Hostetler, 1991, p.3); and focuses on developing new practices which challenge the present beliefs and values by asking whose interests they serve and linking them to the social, political, and economic conditions that create social unjustness. It also attempts to connect the various relations and experiences that exist between the individual and the world so that it serves as a "narrative for agency" as well as a "referent for critique" (Giroux, 1988b, p. 155). Hence, in terms of human interests, emancipatory critical thinking has as its guiding principals critical reflection and liberation because, more than a mere technique to improve "argumentation" and "reasoning," or "to analyze and develop reading and writing assignments," more than an intellectual effort alone, it becomes a means for socio-political praxis (i.e., informed committed action).

Emancipatory critical thinking constitutes an "act of knowledge" in which learners assume the role of creative subjects who realize that "reality" is never an objective, stable, and concrete fact (Freire, 1985). On the contrary, they are aware that it is people's perceptions of reality that makes it appear to be so. Therefore, as Maxine Greene (1988) would put it, emancipatory critical thinkers open new ways of "looking at things," defamiliarize common experience, and challenge rules that are "irrelevant or stulting" (p. 126). Perhaps, to further clarify the concept of emancipatory critical thinking, it would be appropriate to analyze it from the standpoint of what **is not**:

- It is not a system to improve thinking (improving thinking is not necessarily an emancipatory act).
- It is not merely a set of thinking skills (e.g., comparing and contrasting, generating hypotheses, evaluating) stripped of a particular set of values, beliefs, and ideological conditions.
- It is not problem solving without asking what is the problem? Whose problem is it? Why are we trying to solve that particular problem? and, Whose interests would be served if we did/did not solve the problem?
- It is not "reasoning" and "argumenting" for their own sake.
- It is not "thinking done only by students; the teacher must also be dialectically engaged in the process.
- It is not some abstract method of thinking disconnected from the lives of students and teachers.
- It is not a set of static techniques or skiffs; instead it is a dynamic, continuously evolving process requiring judgment and deliberation.
- It is not a thinking exercise to be done exclusively in the classroom.
- It is not **only** thinking without consequent informed and committed action.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Defining critical thinking as emancipatory or otherwise depends on how we perceive our "reality," for our reality is socially constructed. A "socially constructed reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) refers to a particular way of looking at the world based on our immediate environment and context; an environment and a context that have been artificially created for us (though the media education, and other everyday forms of socialization) and to which we have become so accustomed that we take it as an unchangeable fact. We accept such "reality" as natural and take it for granted, unproblematically. As a consequence, it limits our perception and foregrounds certain aspects of our existence while backgrounding others. To many of us, for instance, it

is more important whether "our team" won last Sunday than any of the social problems mentioned above. The socially constructed reality in which we are embedded prevents us from understanding these problems' dangerous implications for, and connections to, our own lives and denies us the possibilities for emancipatory and transformative action. Consequently, because we live in a reality that, far from being natural, is socially constructed, and because we are unable to transcend such reality, our perceptions and beliefs of what is important may be contributing to creating social unjustness.

What seems important to us is, in many cases, what we are told is important. Likewise, what we focus on is the result of a combination of specific social, economic, and political forms which reflect the exclusive interests of a self-selected coalition of powerful groups (Parenti, 1983). For instance, social problems are created by the dominant groups. These groups define and limit the intellectual and political options of the subordinate classes; business organizations force their policies (e.g., the teaching of "critical thinking") upon the school boards and other educational entities; members of a particular ethnic group try to impose their cultural demagogy on the members of other groups. Every time that one of these things occurs, a social problem arises. Nevertheless, oftentimes, these types of problems are downplayed and even ignored because these dominant groups usually manage to create the common perception that such dynamics of domination and injustice are a natural, uncontrollable, course of events. This perception is created and sustained by what is called "hegemonic ideology."

HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGY

The strong domination of a particular social group or individual can be achieved by two means: by the use of force and violence and/or through the inculcation and dissemination of an hegemonic ideology (Gramsci, 1971). As such, an hegemonic ideology is "a system of interdependent ideas that explain and justify particular political, economic, moral [religious], and social conditions and interests" (Sage, 1990, p. 2) whereby people's lives and their constitutive principles, codes, and commonsense consciousness are manipulated to the extent that they willingly or unconsciously accept being subjugated. It is created through a dynamic process by which particular social relations, self-concepts, and world views are inculcated and imposed upon dominated groups by creating symbolically structured events and expectations which render such ideology legitimate and beneficial to all (Sage, 1992).

Hegemonic ideology, in other terms, is a set of arrangements (e.g., ideas and meanings) used to create and sustain a specific socially constructed reality. Once we take these arrangements for granted, it generally follows that we accept as common sense the problems that are associated with such arrangements. By adhering to hegemonic ideology, we adopt a particular social reality, tend to remain within its realms, and become oblivious to what goes on outside of it. Regarding the previous set of problems cited above, and connecting them with the concepts of social construction of reality and hegemonic ideology, it is not difficult to understand why we seldom do anything about these problems.

Why do we tend to be so naive? Why don't we realize that although the aforementioned social problems and forms of injustice do indeed exist, the social reality in which we are embedded forces us to background them? Why aren't we aware that what is foregrounded for us, and we consciously or unconsciously accept, does not serve the interests of the people or society at large but only the interests of self-selected private groups?

The answer to these questions is intimately related to the way in which we are socialized through the educational system. Schooling, as a main means of socialization of youth, does contribute to such dynamics of backgrounding and foregrounding by acting as an ideological catapult for private groups in business and industry. According to critical theorists such as Apple (1990, 1988, 1985) and Giroux (1988a 1988b), schooling is aimed at fostering the idea of competitive marketplace and training a labor force geared to reaching the economic goals imposed by industry and business groups. Hence, under the growing pressure to make the perceived needs of business and industry the primary goals of schooling, education is more interested in providing the educational conditions believed necessary for increasing profit and capital accumulation than in redressing the imbalances in the lives of women, people of color, and the poor (Apple, 1988, p. 274). Because, in its present

form, the "critical thinking" discourse is an intricate part of an educational "reality" tied to a capitalistic political economy, its conceptualization and implementation is also based on such "reality." That is why critical thinking is seldom directed at promoting social and political transformation.

The commonly narrow conceptualization educators and people in general have of critical thinking is not a product of chance. On the contrary, this conception is painstakingly being portrayed and reinforced at all levels of the educational system. The following section will analyze each one of these levels; namely it will describe how schools and universities; teacher education programs; educational research programs; administrative and executive agencies of educational policy; and textbooks, scholarly journals, and other educational materials limit our perception and contribute to the economic ideology so pervasive in our society.

THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE UNJUST CONDITIONS IN SOCIETY

In fact these mechanisms of social construction of reality are constantly present in education. The educational system does not exist in a vacuum but in close relationships of mutual support with many other social institutions which also serve the interests of the dominant groups. This system, then, is an extremely powerful means of social construction of a particular reality on behalf of the dominant groups.

Through a continuous inculcation of social norms and beliefs, the educational system teaches individuals to become "effective" members of society. As such, social membership is acquired by subscribing to a particular reality that is coherent with the world view of the dominant groups. Moreover, the views that are not in line with the dominant perspective are completely rejected. In this regard, individuals learn to use and accept certain institutionalized forms of language that, on the one hand, actively silence some individuals (normally members of the oppressed groups) while, on the other hand, validate the voices of others (those belonging to the oppressive groups). Schools also legitimize oppressive and exploitative social relations by teaching individuals to both internalize and externalize their own social conditions and status. This is done by attaching a false sense of tradition to particular privileged views and social relations.

In the United States, through the use of these mechanisms of social construction of reality, the educational system contributes not only to the socialization of youth but to the reproduction and dissemination of a dominant ideology based on economics. Apple (1990) argues that the educational system "is both a 'cause' and an 'effect' [for it] serves to give legitimacy to [particular] economic and social forms and ideologies" (p. 42). To better explain how education is tied into the economic ideology, a brief historical review of the origins of the educational system in the United States is necessary. With the arrival of multicultural masses of immigrants to the United States at the beginning of the Industrial Era, growing urban crowds, unrest, and poverty became exacerbating problems. The American school system was created to some extent in response to these problems in order to bring about social order (Kaestle, 1983). However, according to Gutman (1983), the most important reason for the establishment of a system of schooling in the United States was to train immigrant workers and their future generations in the factory system. These workers came from pre-industrial cultures in which labor values of autonomy and individual decision making were the norm, and these values were not what U.S. business owners wanted. Consequently, schools were established for the purpose of eliminating cultural distinctions and teaching children the moral values of "aggressive Protestantism, temperance, and English-language chauvinism" (Ritz,1975, p. 175), values which were (and still are) consistent with those of American businesses and industry.

LEVELS OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Brameld (1965) reminds us that the educational system is not only limited to schools, but it "embraces the whole complex of human dynamics [and structures] through which every culture seeks to maintain and to innovate its operations, and purposes" (p.15). This complex of dynamics and structures can also be called a "system." Our educational system is composed of the following structures.

Schools and Universities

Schools and universities are the major sources of knowledge production and distribution and sites where social, political, and personal meanings are conveyed and created or oppressed (Liston & Zeichner, 1987). The present curriculum is designed to have bearing on any classroom context regardless of the historical, cultural, and socio-economic differences that characterize various schools and students (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). The knowledge schools and universities produce and transmit is, as a norm, eminently technical; education is stripped of any substantial concern with justice, equality, and democracy (McLaren, 1991, p. 17). In this vein, almost forty years ago, Einstein (1954) expressed concerns in this regard: "I oppose the idea that the school has to teach directly the special knowledge and these accomplishments which one has to use later directly in life. The demands of life are much too manifold to let such a specialized training in school appear possible" (p. 64).

Through daily teaching practices, one-sided character formation, impersonal management techniques, standardized accountability schemes, and teacher-proof curricula, schools and universities emphasize disciplinary control and encourage students' cheerful ideological subordination to the ideology of consumerism. Freedom of expression and creative teaching methods are practically non-existent; and, teaching has been reduced to transmitting a body of technical skills to be mastered by students without concomitant understanding of how to construct their identities and social relations (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991).

But students are not the only victims of such dynamics. Teachers, too, suffer the consequences. "Schools are, above all, socio-cultural settings in which the norms, values, and mores of the larger society are acted out upon teachers as much as by them. Teachers me bound by implicit and explicit assumptions made by others about their functions and roles, and it is difficult to break out of the norms for teaching behaviors... however hard any single individual may try" (Dodds & Locke, 1984, p. 81). As a consequence, teachers are perceived as mere functionaries, public servants, or technicians whose duty is primarily to implement rather than conceptualize pedagogical practice and to transmit knowledge which is primarily associated with technical terms (Giroux, 1986b).

Universities are not exempt from such problems. Actually, they may suffer the most from them. According to Giroux (1988b), professors too confront university dynamics that revolve around turf control and competition for scarce resources (e.g., tenured positions, publications, interested students). Insofar as individual concerns of professors continue to be related to their own security, intellectual freedom and social welfare will not be a priority in academia. For whatever reason, the inability of schools and universities to address problems of justice and public life has contributed to the decline of political courage and ethics in the practices of schooling. These educational institutions are now merely concerned with transmitting information in unproblematic ways; ways which are designated to make the "American" economic system more competitive in the world markets and show utter disregard for social justice and transformative political action (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1988a, 1988b).

Teacher Education Programs

Although teacher education programs are part of the university context due to their specific character and direct effects on schools, I have opted for commenting about them in a separate section. Teacher education programs prepare more than 200,000 new teachers every year (Liston & Zeichner, 1987); yet, "teacher education consistently fails to produce teachers who have a critical insight into their role and function as teachers in schools, of the value of the knowledge they teach, and of the role of schooling in society" (Kirk, 1986a, p. 155). This is due to the fact that prospective teachers, as well as their educators, fall victims of the environment in which they are embedded because they are subjected to the same prevailing types of social, political, and personal indoctrination throughout their schooling. Under these circumstances, prospective teachers and teacher educators lack the capacity for reflective thought and critical judgment and are unable to stand back from their experience (Kirk, 1986a, 1986b). Hence these two groups become both victims and transmitters of social control and private interests.

Teacher education consists merely of a series of teaching acts and educational accounts designed to be implemented in an insular institutional context (Liston & Zeichner, 1987). These acts and accounts are stripped of any socio-political, economic, and cultural analysis of the

contexts in which they will be practiced. Even in teacher education programs in which reflection is encouraged, it focuses on technical and procedural aspects of teaching instead of on ethical judgments and critical action. The majority of teacher education programs do not problematize either the "craft" of teaching nor the context in which it is usually practiced. In other words, these programs seldom establish connections between life in the classroom and the wider society.

In these programs, teaching is not viewed as a democratizing or counter-hegemonic activity. On the contrary, by accepting and transmitting both the teaching act and its purposes uncritically, teaching becomes a means to consolidate and perpetuate the existing socio-economic, cultural, and political structures. Put differently, these programs are usually absent of political content and are "propelled by the logic of instructional technology and mandated by the state to provide requisite technical and managerial expertise" (Giroux, 1988a, p. 161). Consequently, teacher education becomes a process of professional socialization and induction in which the mastery of technical teaching and the transmission of uncritical knowledge are the norm.

Classroom reality is "rarely presented as if it were socially constructed, historically determined, and reproduced through institutionalized relationships of class, gender and race. ... [On the contrary, it is presented as if it were] neutral terrain devoid of power and politics" (Giroux, 1988a, p. 187). Given these precedents, it is little wonder that teacher education seldom results in the radicalization of teachers nor helps them perceive themselves as "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988b).

Educational Research Programs

Educational research programs are also affected by societal norms and beliefs. Educational research basically adheres to the predominant positivistic paradigm and claims to represent the real world in logical forms by regarding knowledge as static and, ultimately, empirically based (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). The positivistic discourse, however, is a poor choice in the educational context for it is mired in the constraints of its methods and overlooks the fact that educational phenomena are dynamic and ever-changing rather than uniform and static (Gowin, 1987). Moreover, knowledge production in the natural and social sciences is marred by a number of theoretical and epistemological shortcomings which characterize its almost exclusive technical orientation at the expense of any concerns with marginal discourses and political and economic criticism. The inadequacies of educational research do not end with the use of discourse that is not only narrow in scope, but also methodologically and philosophically inappropriate.

The purposes of educational research are also questionable. Most educational research makes as its most important concern the mastery of pedagogical techniques and the [unproblematic] transmission of knowledge instrumental to the existing society. As Kozol (1990) states, the purpose of educational research "is not to teach young people how to raise Hell. The purpose is to teach them how to sit still in their places, how to be 'good children,' how to be benign, inactive, terrified, respectable; ...The goal of research in this context is not ethical action based upon reflection, but a self perpetuating process of delay" (p. 183).

Finally, educational research must be scrutinized in one more area: the people who undertake it. Much as their instructional counterparts, most educational researchers are themselves victims of institutional and philosophical biases which constrain their ability to devise and practice alternative discourses. Therefore, educational researchers are only capable to pose and investigate certain kinds of questions that have already deemed acceptable. In this sense, the knowledge they possess limits the extent of their research. Yet, educational researchers are considered experts, and as such, are given the power not only to interpret educational phenomena but also to create institutional policy. Consequently, since research is influenced and embodied by the ideological mindframes of the researchers (McLaren, 1991), its products and conclusions are also biased. Thus, educational researchers become agents of social reproduction "who expropriate the moral and skillful resources of people under the cover of scientific progress and enlightenment, and fragment and administer to discrete spheres of people's lives" (Alt, 1983, p. 98) The result of most of the ongoing educational research is a blatant depersonalization of students and teachers who must sacrifice their identity to a formal dependency upon the dominant discourses of bureaucratic organizations, the biases of professional experts, and the unscrupulous

and often times ignorant decisions of invisible executives.

Administrative and Executive Agencies of Educational Policy

Administrative and executive agencies of educational policy constitute another important means for the reproduction and dissemination of an educational policy which supports the private interests of privileged, dominant groups. Even when there is talk about reforming education, reform is not seen on the basis of democratic commitment to transform the imbalances and inequalities in society. Rather, it reinforces the "educational conditions believed necessary in both increasing profit and capital accumulation [in a competitive marketplace]" (Apple, 1988, p. 274). In this sense, not only the content of formal learning but also the process of schooling become central to the production of an amenable labor force and the enhancement of the capitalist ideology (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Such orientations are clearly reflected by the most prominent educational reform groups (e.g., The Carnegie Forum, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1986; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) when they remind "Americans, yet again, of the economic challenges pressing us on all sides; [and the need] to assert primacy of education as the foundation of economic growth... " (The Carnegie Forum, 1986, p. 7).

In order to accomplish their purposes, these educational groups have reduced reform to measures such as raising standards and achievement competencies for students and teachers, increasing the time students spend in schools, adding new material to the curriculum, creating teacher-proof materials and employing more strict (quantifable) management and evaluation techniques. For the most part, all these reform measures are conceived and enacted by individuals in the industry and business sectors who are interested in maintaining an educational structure that matches and complements the needs of these sectors.

In creating and enacting such reform measures, these individuals take the decision-making power about the purposes and methods of teaching away from the teachers. In consequence, by calculatedly separating planning from the execution tasks, educational policy makers control educators by reducing them to "economic utilities," mere instrumental executors of designed functions who are alienated from their capacities, interests, needs, and emotions. In this sense, educational policy makers create a continuous apprehension, anxiety, and uneasiness about one's (teachers' and students') abilities and potentialities and prevent them from making valuable contributions to the process of educating.

The purposeful "deskilling" of teachers and degradation of students limits the chances of both groups for self-development and liberation (Bastion et a1.,1986) and produces a feeling of being wasted that leads to their emotional deadness (Alt, 1983). Paradoxically, emotional deadness in schools is then used by business and industry groups to blame the supposed breakdown of our society (unemployment, poverty, economic depression, substance abuse, etc.) on schools; thus, legitimizing and reinforcing the need for these groups' intrusion in order to "revitalize" education and make America "great" once again (Apple, 1988).

Textbooks, Scholarly Journals, and Other Educational Materials

Against the common belief that textbooks, scholarly journals, and other educational materials are merely neutral conveyors of ideas, these materials do represent particular ideological tendencies that give meaning to and organize school life. Textbook publishers and scholarly journal editors provide teachers with texts, journals, and other educational materials that emphasize particular readings and ideologies and, for the most part reflect the dominant discourse. "The formal corpus of school knowledge found in, say, most history books and social studies texts and materials has, over the years, presented a somewhat biased view of the true nature of the amount of possible use of internecine strife in which groups in this country and others have engaged" (Apple, 1990, p. 85). Also, positivistic journals based on scientific methodology and epistemology automatically reject critical qualitative research articles due to the fact that "peer reviewers" in positivistic journals have been socialized within an uncritical system. Consequently, they help form a perception that scientific, positivistic ideas are the important ones.

Another factor that makes textbooks a socializing tool is their availability to selected sectors of the population and not to others. Given the high cost of books (costs resulting from the high fees demanded by publishers and authors'

agents), books are hardly accessible to the poor. Even in the academic settings, the high cost of books discourages students from "building their personal libraries and ultimately may discourage them from reading altogether" (Larson, 1992). This way, textbook publishers contribute to the fact that only the rich have access to printed information while at the same time depriving the poor of that same information. Consequently, both groups are socialized differently.

Finally, textbooks, journals, and other educational materials totally ignore hermenutical qualities and reflect the biases of their publishers and editors. These people exercise powerful influences in the ways in which knowledge is mediated, produced, transformed, and consumed. "Textbooks, become objects to be read independently of the contexts in which they are engaged by readers. ... The meaning of a text is already defined by the author" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 97). Needless to say, publishers themselves have been previously socialized and "educated" by the system to which they are now contributing. When socialization is completed, its effects go unrecognized. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to believe that the majority of educational publishers and editors are oblivious to matters of and concerns with, social justice. In a sense, by publishing mainstreamed texts, journals, and educational materials, they contribute to the perpetuation of the vicious cycle.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In the introduction of this paper, I mentioned that emancipatory critical thinking is entrenched in critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a didactic form whose primary purpose is to make the learners (both the teacher and the student alike) more fully human and whose ultimate purpose is to create a more just society. In the light of these objectives, critical pedagogy was born as an alternative to that which views schooling as a tool for social control. As such, it attempts to directly connect schooling with social issues of oppression and make schools legitimate sites for contestation and political struggle (Giroux, 1988a,1988b; Liston & Zeichner, 1987). Critical pedagogy strives to give voice to those who are routinely silenced by bringing to the fore questions about knowledge production and oppressive relations of race, class, and gender, among others. In this realm, learners can perceive themselves as reflective beings who, by dealing consciously and purposefully with their particular situations, are able to create and transform their social conditions (Freire, 1985). Moreover, critical pedagogy endeavors to make knowledge problematic through critically interrogating the learners' own educational experiences (Bigelow, 1990) and conceiving alternative spaces and possibilities for students not only to become different in a reflective way but also for them to disclose and refuse social imbalances and shape new visions (Greene, 1991).

Critical pedagogy analyzes social relations and practices and raises the learners' awareness about the unjust and contradictory values and conditions in our society by equiping them with the necessary skills to understand and critique the society in which they live, enabling them to share their personal experiences, "teaching them how to probe social factors that make and limit who they are ... [and reflecting] on who they could be," helping them establish connections between their lives and their historical precedents, and "enlisting them as social researchers investigating their own lives" (Bigelow, 1990, p. 439).

CONCLUSION

We educators tend not to act to solve social problems. With few exceptions, and due to the prevailing political ideology based on economic growth, we are inclined to see ourselves almost exclusively as mere transmitters of knowledge, thus separating our profession and ourselves from any concerns with social justice and equality. In most cases, such separation is at the unconscious level for we are unaware that we, too, are victims of of an hegemonic ideology and a distorted "social reality" which serve the interests of a few dominant groups. For that reason, we seldom stop to think whether our daily actions and beliefs have important implications for ourselves, our students, and society at large. Notwithstanding, our lack of awareness does not mean that we are not contributing to worsening social problems and perpetuating injustice. In fact, we are.

This is why it is critical that those of us who teach critical thinking ask ourselves what type of human interests we are serving in our pedagogical practices. Critical thinking, in its present forms (namely, technical and practical), cannot

be rendered either beneficial for all nor just. On the contrary, it deliberately contributes to social unjustness and inequality. Insofar as we continue to regard critical thinking unproblematically, with no connections to the social, political, economic, and cultural spheres, it will continue to be a tool that serves the interests of particular groups while contributing to social unjustness.

To change this, critical pedagogy needs to be the basis for an alternative form of critical thinking; a form of critical thinking that challenges the traditional definition and practices of critical thinking; defies the structures which perpetuate the social reality in which we live; and, ultimately, seeks personal emancipation and social justice. Rooted in critical pedagogy, emancipatory critical thinking becomes an important means for reflection and struggle for it is used to (a) uncover the hegemonic ideology that bounds our social reality; (b) challenge the traditional definitions and assumptions regarding critical thinking; (c) transform the structures (schools and universities, teacher education programs, educational research, educational administration, and textbooks) within the actual educational system; and (d) fight for social justice in the larger community.

Although emancipatory critical thinking skills do not automatically guarantee social, political, or economic emancipation and human agency, they, however, can provide an essential precondition for analyzing relations of power and social injustice, liberating ourselves, and helping others do the same. Through emancipatory critical thinking we can reflect about the implications of our beliefs and values, find new possibilities, and gain the courage to transform social conditions. Through emancipatory critical thinking we can transcend the limitations of ideology and demystify the socially constructed reality by engaging in a conscious uncovering of what remains hidden, rejecting pre-digested knowledge *per se*, and creating new possibilities for social justice.

Finally, I don't want to end this paper without acknowledging those who valiantly struggle for freedom, those few "tranformative intellectuals." I can only hope that this paper serves as an act of encouragement and validation of their work so that they continue to engage in emanicipatory critical thinking and pedagogy and persevere in opening new public spaces where social justice can begin.

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