NEITHER LIBERAL NOR CONSERVATIVE:

THE THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL NUANCE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN A SECTARIAN CLIMATE

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Abstract

This article, acknowledging the variety of interpretations and applications of critical pedagogy, delves into the thought and politics of Paulo Freire to review theoretical and political foundations, along with a consideration of common criticisms and responses from critical theorists. Informed by recent literature, I highlight the theory of critical pedagogy as dialectic, and examine the inherent political nature of critical pedagogy as non-sectarian, anti-neoliberal, radical-progressive, democratic, and humanist. After reviewing the theoretical and political foundations of critical pedagogy, I consider criticisms in the literature related to its emphasis on theory as abstract, potential inherent sexism and cultural invasiveness. As I aim to show, these criticisms, while not without some merit, are based primarily on a strawman portrayal of critical pedagogy as inherently liberating without serious interrogation of the intentions of the teacher. Noteworthy criticisms which may help the field of critical pedagogy to evolve beyond a myopic view of democracy originate from Indigenous scholars' approach to integration and critique of critical pedagogy. The significance of this article pertains to clarification and reconsideration of critical principles

in an era where schooling serves as a battleground between liberal and conservative forces. In an era of polarization, critical pedagogy contributes an underrepresented perspective in this debate, as it critiques both Right and Left, offering a critically nuanced rather than a sectarian assessment.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy; Paulo Freire; Educational politics

Critical pedagogy describes a unity and divergence of thought between progressive thinkers of the previous one hundred years around common concepts about the purpose of schooling and its relation to society. Ross (2017) writes, "There is no single ideological perspective or particular social movement that defines critical pedagogy…The core idea of critical pedagogy is to submit received understandings to critical analysis with the aim of increasing human knowledge and freedom" (p. 608). Darder, Baltodano & Torres (2017) argue that "critical pedagogy must be understood as a contested terrain of struggle, where divergent critical educational theorists are positioned across [a] radical intellectual and epistemological continuum", as an inseparable part of their own social and historical epoch (p. 20). Critical pedagogy refers to a basic stance of questioning relationships of power in education with the goal of coming to critical consciousness of the factors that prevent humanization, therefore, its practice and historical emergence are countless across time and space.

The roots of critical pedagogy documented in the context of the United States begin in the early twentieth century with W.E.B. Dubois and Carter G. Woodson, and their contemporary John Dewey. These authors challenged the dominant model of mainstream and industrial schooling, arguing for the influence of local people in schools to further the democratic, emancipatory possibility of schooling (Apple, 2013). Their writings and practice prepared the ground for sociologies of education and the evolution of critical pedagogy in response to feminism and critical race theory, among other strands as the field evolved.

While Dubois, Woodson and Dewey cannot be underestimated—nor those who later contributed to the critique of industrial schooling (Illich, 1971; Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976)—Paulo Freire has been credited by many as the founder of critical pedagogy, or at least "the most influential educational philosopher in the development of critical pedagogical thought and practice" (Darder, et al, 2017, p. 5). Paulo Freire's impact in the area of critical pedagogy has been profound. Critical pedagogy manifests in many different ways, and continues to generate a diverse array of applications, questions and debate. Ross (2017) suggests a "less orthodox conception of what

it means to practice critical pedagogy" especially considering the fact that although Freire is considered the founder, there is no single ideological perspective that defines it (p. 608).

With the historical examples, and a broad circle (Ross, 2017) of critical pedagogy in mind, I will first focus on the main theoretical elements of Freire's work (1970, 1994, 1998, 2004, 2005, 2013), alongside prominent theorists in critical pedagogy in academia (Apple, 2004, 2017; Anyon, 2017, 2011; Aronowitz, 2017; Giroux, 1983, 1988, 2001, 2009; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2006, Shor, 1996). After reviewing the main theoretical positions Freire, et al, develop, I describe the political orientation of critical pedagogy as primarily a critique of neo-liberalism, ultimately adopting a progressive-radical stance. With the theoretical and political positions of critical pedagogy in mind, I consider common criticisms levelled against it, as well as Freire's and others' responses to critique.

CRITICAL THEORETICAL PILLARS

Theoretically, critical pedagogy is at home in paradox. While plural and simultaneously sharing common concepts (McLaren, 2017), critical pedagogy is a theory of negative-theory. In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire (2013) writes, "We lacked theory… Our education was *not* theoretical" (p. 33). This does not mean that critical pedagogy is without theory, but dialectically it does not dichotomize theory and practice. A negation of theory and its concomitant verbalism represents the essence of Freire's critical pedagogy. As a theory-against-theory, Freire's critical pedagogy begins at the moment of action, simply and at the level of everyday discourse. "A progressive theory of political education", he writes, is "grounded in the local context of people, indeterminate until made real, material, embodied" (Freire, 1994, p. 18). The social-historical context of the people, its reality and materiality replace abstract theory and verbosity.

In this sense, the theory behind critical pedagogy is not simply lacking, but rather is a theory informed by praxis, one that begins with the people—in their time and place—to problematize relations of power through critique, which is, paradoxically, theoretical. Beginning with the people to create a problem-posing education,

Freire's most basic principle, emerges from a critique of institutional power structures informed by critical theory, a complex position on the nature of being human, and an interpretivist understanding of the role of school in society (Soltis & Feinberg, 2009).

Rather than build knowledge according to principles of the scientific method, where repeatability, measurement, control and prediction are valued, "[C]ritical educators argue that knowledge should be analyzed on the basis of whether it is oppressive and exploitative" (McLaren, 2017, p. 69). Freire (2004) reflects the underlying questions a critical theorist must keep in mind: "In favor of what do I study? In favor of whom? Against what do I study? Against whom do I study" (p. 60). Critical pedagogy rejects positivism and the principle of neutrality, both of which would argue Freire's (2004) principles are biased. The methodology of critical pedagogy is characterized by theoretical negation and critique of dominant power structures. Ontologically, critical pedagogy dialectically theorizes schools as complex arenas of sociocultural reproduction and resistance.

Work on the role of social and cultural reproduction and resistance in schools (Anyon, 2011, 2017; Apple, 2004; Aronowitz, 2017; Bourdieu, 1993; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983; Martinez, 2010; Willis, 1976) pertains to critical pedagogy insofar as it reveals schools as sites of ideological accommodation and contestation. As Freire (2004) writes, "[B]ecause I recognize the limits of education, be it formal or informal, I recognize its power as well" (p. 36).

The overt and hidden curriculum is one area heavily researched in critical pedagogy for its ideological role in cultural reproduction. Bourdieu (1993) discussed the hidden curriculum in terms of cultural capital. The hidden curriculum selects students for success or failure based on their perceived cultural capital. The school, in valuing certain forms of cultural capital over others automatically and invisibly privileges children from white, middle and upper-class heteronormative households, thus effecting the reproduction of social distinctions based on race, class and gender.

Critique of the overt and hidden curriculum in critical pedagogy reveals the seemingly innocuous elements of school life for the ideological interests they maintain—such as seating, scheduling, assemblies, multicultural rhetoric, ritualistic requirements, grading, social events and textbook content reinforcing the dominant logic of capital. (Apple, 2004; Martinez, 2010). Anyon (2017) documented the hidden curriculum at work across class-stratified school sites, demonstrating that the hidden as well as the overt curriculum interfaces with students' perceived cultural capital, while Bowles and Gintis (1976) show how the social life of school corresponds to the capitalist valuation of hierarchy, competition and individualism. Parallel to theorizing sociocultural reproduction and resistance in schooling, Freire's (1970, 2013) work positions human consciousness intertwined in the making of history.

Freire's theory of consciousness describes numerous iterations of consciousness at varying levels of criticality (magical, naive, critical, oppressor, oppressed, sub-oppressor) in response to social and historical conditions (1970, 1998, 2013). Regardless of the state of consciousness, Freire locates consciousness as socio-historical, transformed by and transforming the world through work and interaction, unfinished and naturally political.

More than the historical context being inextricable to our being, as social and historical, Freire (1994, 1998) means being (as consciousness and materially as society) *is* historical, in a dialectical sense of being open, indeterminate and yet in relation to what already is. Being conditioned by historical circumstances, we are not determined by them. Freire opens up the space for human agency—for a response—in the face of economic, political and social structures that pre-date any specific human being. Freire refuses fatalism as resignation of our true state as creators of history rather than its objects. As creators of history, doing politics is a natural human activity, and not one confined to the privileged classes. As unfinished, indeterminate social and historical creatures Freire (1994) locates human being in a matrix of hope that "needs practice in order to become historical concreteness" (p. 8). Hope refers to what is not, but could be; what is wished for, but not had. Not to hope is to exist

in stasis, a human impossibility. Not to hope, or to be deprived of hope is to exist objectified, solidified, and resigned. Freire's (1994) concept of hope relates closely with the concept of utopia, both have similar functions in defining limit-situations, sites of possibility and the conditions for critique. Like hope, the concept of dialogue reflects human nature as a space in between, inherently social and in process.

Freire (1970; 2013) writes on dialogue as a main ontological and epistemological concept. Often, in commonsense logic, speech and dialogue are diminished as only talk, as if dialogue is not a form of action, of thinking itself (Kitts, 2018). For Freire (1970), "to exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it" (p. 88). Freire's theory of naming and naming with others—dialogue—intimately connects with transformation of self, others and world. When in naming the world, action and reflection are joined, praxis is created. When naming lacks action and reflection, it becomes verbalism; and when naming and action coexist without reflection the result is activism (Freire, 1970, pp. 87-88). Praxis, as the ultimate level of self-others-world transformation, names a state where naming+action and naming+reflection are not dichotomized. Praxis names the most humane state, where humans name, act and reflect with one another to transform the world. It is the essence of human history and culture, to transform the world to thrive. Yet, dialogue, depending on its relation to action and reflection can effect various forms of transformation or lack thereof.

Freire (2013) presents an analysis of dialogue and anti-dialogue, which implies that dialogue is not the same as speaking or conversing. Freire's illustration of dialogue and anti-dialogue shows that it is very possible, and common, to converse without dialoguing. As Freire (2013) shows, dialogue presumes a horizontal relationship of empathy in a "loving, humble, hopeful, trusting and critical" matrix (p. 42). Anti-dialogue, on the other hand, manifests a vertical relationship of one over another, without empathy, in a matrix that is "loveless, arrogant, hopeless, mistrustful, and acritical" (Freire, 2013, p. 43). Realizing our most humane state, means treating others as their most human, in a non-hierarchical relationship which demands trust, honesty and radical love between people. Without these things

dialogue is not possible. As Freire (1970) writes, "Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (p. 89). Freire's theory of radical love leading to dialogue as praxis and humanization demolishes the hierarchical, humiliating teacher-student relationship of the industrial schooling model. A main claim of Freire's (1970) concerns the resolving of the student-teacher contradiction based on an epistemology of relative knowledge and relative ignorance where "Nadie educa nadie, y nadie educa sola" (No one educates anyone, nor is anyone educated alone) (p. 80).

Freire's theory of knowledge requires beginning with the knowledge of the people in the room, knowledge of their vocabulary, their priorities, their lifeworld. He writes, "A transcendence of commonsense knowledge…must be achieved only by way of that very knowledge" (Freire, 1994, p. 146). According to Freire (1994), beginning with experiential knowledge does not require staying at the level of experiential knowledge (p. 70). Problematizing this knowledge catalyzes progress from a naïve to a critical state of consciousness.

Freire (1970) juxtaposes the banking method—which takes a very different ontological position on human being in the world, one where students are treated as things, without the possibility of action or reflection—to the problem-posing method, which views human beings as makers of their world, through trust and in dialogue. The banking method operates on the assumption that a transfer of knowledge is possible, whereas "The *impossible* from the viewpoint of a theory of knowledge [is] to transfer knowledge" (Freire, 1994, p. 118).

In a problem-posing education, students take a step back—as historical beings—from their local context to problematize it. Problematizing conditions—like environment, work, relationships—creates the horizon of hope, of utopia as the basis for action and reflection. Freire's (1970, 2013) pedagogy describes building the program content and curriculum with students through the use of generative themes, limit situations and codification combined with showing phonemic families. In this way, literacy becomes an extension of the world, about the world.

A problem-posing pedagogy—based as it must be on dialogue, hope and love—disposes of teacher-student hierarchies and oppressive aspects of the overt and hidden curriculum. Freire (1970) writes that teachers must view themselves as learners and view their students as teachers. Students too, need to be introduced to the idea of themselves as teachers, in opposition to the banking method of education where teachers have the knowledge and students are to absorb and regurgitate it. Resolving the student-teacher contradiction requires humility, love and trust on the part of the teacher, based on an epistemology of relative knowledge and ignorance, meaning "[T]here is no such thing as absolute ignorance or absolute wisdom (no one ignores everything, just as no one knows everything" (Freire, 2013, p. 41).

Resistant to the logic of Enlightenment rationality, hooks (1994) explores the role of emotion as excitement in her critical practice, and Darder (2017) writes on Freire's position on embodiment as essential in pedagogical practice. Critical pedagogy gives epistemic status to the role of emotion, embodiment, radical love, hope, and material reality. While the theory and practice are open to interpretation, fundamentally critical pedagogy interrogates models of industrial schooling, and seeks to share power with, rather than have power over students (Shor, 1996).

CRITICAL POLITICAL NUANCE

Education, in critical pedagogy, can never be neutral, because there is no such thing as neutrality absent of power relations. Even to have the option to be neutral politically is itself a position of power and stability. Neutrality serves to mask power relations. As Freire (2004) writes, "Nobody can be in the world, with the world, and with others in a neutral manner" (p. 60). Political action is a natural way of humans being in the world, and education as action cannot not be political. Freire, however, separates our natural political being from interest-bound, partisan manifestations of politics. Critical pedagogy critiques both liberal and conservative political views, arguing that sectarianism is a solidified stance that denies our fundamental being as dialectical.

Sectarianism cannot be a political model for critical pedagogy, because both the Right and the Left contribute to dehumanization in their own ways. Freire (1994) "rejects conservative, neoliberal postmodernity" (p. 10), and Giroux (2001) argues that conservative and liberal ideology have both "been firmly entrenched in the logic of necessity and efficiency", which denies the cultural and political nature of schools (p. 73). Conservative forces push a one-sided, Westernized curriculum as a set of facts and attack the "public domain, [while] conservative language of helping the poor, increasing accountability and giving choice are ways to hide stratifying and racializing effects of policy" (Apple, 2004, p. xi). Aronowitz (2017) argues that conservative rhetoric and practice demean child-centered curriculum and pedagogy in favor of so-called objective measurements of performance, such as standardized testing. Furthermore, conservative ideology distinguishes between so-called high and low culture (Giroux, 2001, p. 73) while reforming teacher education toward technocratic as opposed to intellectual ends (Giroux, 2009; Kincheloe, 2004, Nieto, 2000).

Liberal's "thin democracy" finds gender and race dynamics equally significant to class analysis (Apple, 2004, p. xxiii); while liberal policies "over-value individual achievement, science, neutrality and the power of school to fix the problems of society, turning educational concerns into administrative 'problems' rather than instances of economic, ethical and political conflict" (Apple, 2004, p. 16). Furthermore, liberal ideology has remained for the most part uncritical of how practices such as tracking, labelling and the hidden and overt curriculum are not conducive to equality and social mobility (Apple, 2004, p. 135). Liberal ideology embodies the missionary mentality, where well-meaning, but oblivious people invade a culture out of pity and a lack of reflection on the structural determinants that necessitated help in the first place. Unbeknownst to the helpers, liberalism often perpetuates false generosity, which solidifies their position as 'helper' or 'charitable,' and prevents true revolution from occurring because it stifles communion (Freire, 1970). Not only do liberals often invade in the form of helping, but their sectarian rhetoric often alienates everyday people, contributing to a state of anti-dialogue, what Freire

(1994) calls, "verbal incontinence" or "explosion of verbiage" (p. 42). In today's globalized world, though the Right and the Left are portrayed as polarized—mainly in the form of cultural wars—they strike similar positions economically in their support for neoliberal ideology.

While liberal and conservative forces have their differences, it is not analytically helpful to separate a critique of the Right from a critique of the Left. The critique of both Right and Left in critical pedagogy is the argument against sectarianism and neoliberalism. Apple (2004) critiques "the conservative restoration" as a "hegemonic bloc", where both neo-liberals and neo-conservatives join to "commodify everything" (p. 177). In a globalized world, liberal and conservative political sects prioritize the demands of the market before the those of a democracy. Brosio (2017) argues that capitalism and democracy are incompatible since capitalism requires a large underclass and gross inequality, but democracy aims to eliminate inequality and increase participation. The public school, because it answers both to democratic and capitalist demands, is a complex site, maybe even relatively autonomous, as Althusser (2014) argued. Despite this, conservative and liberal ideology view capitalism and democracy as compatible, while a critical view laments the loss of the concept of the public good by both liberal and conservative views. Although liberal and conservative pundits polarize their views, critical theorists argue that both factions promote neoliberal ideology, which privileges the demands of capital (Apple, 2004; De Lissivoy, et al; Freire, 1994, 2004; Groenke, 2009; Lipman, 2017).

While neoliberal ideology espouses open borders in the name of freedom and the elimination of social class, Freire (1994) writes, it "does not have the strength to eliminate social class" (p. 99), and it is based on a fatalist, ahistorical understanding of reality, one that resigns injustice to "that's the way it is" mentality, a "facile adaptation to the catastrophes of the capitalist world" (p. 181). Lipman (2017) argues that, in reaction to the social gains made after World War 2, neoliberal ideology perpetuates white supremacy and "shifts responsibility for inequality produced by the State onto parents, students, schools, communities, and teachers" (p. 580). This imbalance cannot sustain

itself, as Lipman (2017) writes, as globalization increases the gap between rich and poor, "it is sowing the seeds of its own destruction" (p. 594).

De Lissovoy, Means, and Saltman, (2017) locate neoliberal ideology in the form of "vouchers, charters, for-profit educational management, standardization and corporate managerialism" threatening the survival of the concept of the commons (p. 598). The loss of the commons pulls the rug out from public schools and shifts power toward privatization of schooling. This political shift, hegemonically achieved as consensus against public schooling builds, turns students into consumers and leaves education vulnerable to special interests, as opposed to the rhetoric of the common good (though through the practices of property tax allocation, labelling, and tracking, public schools as promoters of the public good has been historically only rhetorical).

Neither liberal nor conservative, critical pedagogy advocates for "the importance, the urgency, of the democratization of the public school, and of the ongoing training of its educators, among [them] include[d] security people, cafeteria personnel, and custodians, and so on" (Freire, 1994, p. 21). Freire, like Dewey, connected literacy for political participation, citizenship and democratic values. Yet unlike Dewey, Freire (1994) did not mean a benign democracy, but "a democratic radicalness for which it is not enough merrily to proclaim that in this or that society man and woman enjoy 'equal freedom' meaning the right to starve, have no schools to send their children to, and be homeless" (p. 157). By democracy, Freire meant the transformation of people's material lives for the better. Concrete actions to reclaim control of the means of production in a militant democracy are offered by Aronowitz (2017), who recommends schools cut their ties to corporate interests, and the idea of schooling be separated from the practice of education.

CRITIQUE AND RESPONSE

In *Pedagogy of Hope,* Freire (1994) responds to several criticisms he received in response to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: the abstraction of utopia and hope, an overemphasis on consciousness, the use of

experiential knowledge, sexist language in his first work, cultural invasion, and sectarianism.

Criticisms on the centrality of hope and utopia in critical pedagogy have stressed that such an emphasis reflects a privileged position (Cho, 2006), and leads to a solipsistic idealism. Freire (1994) states that hope is a vital necessity to the peasants living day to day with next to nothing, while opulent mansions line their borders, which is anything but a privileged position. Freire (1994) clarifies that he never intended for hope to be the only condition needed to bring about a humanized revolution, but a precondition—"like a fish needing unpolluted water" (p. 2). Freire (1970) repeatedly stressed that the life of the mind must connect with relevant, material circumstances. This was the whole point of his theory of learning.

Yet, Freire (1994) "acknowledges [my] slips in the direction of an overemphasis on awareness" (p. 102). These slips, however, do not discount the major role of consciousness for a pedagogy of the oppressed—it must be equally considered with objective determinants in a dialectical way, where each influences and is influenced by the other. Criticisms on the role of consciousness in Freire's (1994) work miss the point: Consciousness and materiality relate dialectically; they are not the other and yet are not themselves without the other. Viewing consciousness as irrelevant, or secondary to material reality leads to a conception of history as closed, determined, anything but the way Freire describes the openness and "unfinishedness" of history and human consciousness.

Freire (1994) states he had also been criticized for his focus on experiential knowledge, as if his method and philosophy did not aim to get beyond knowledge of everyday experience. Freire (1994) defends the role of everyday experience, saying, "[S]tarting with the 'knowledge of experience had' in order to get beyond it is not *staying* in that knowledge" (p. 70). Freire (1994) was adamant that educators never push their agenda on people, but instead pose the "educands" reality to them as a problem (p. 45). This problem-posing method was the mechanism to propel people beyond their everyday world, without at the same time having someone else's world imposed on them, as in the banking method.

Freire also addressed criticisms of his work as culturally invasive and sectarian, which are totally unfounded based on a close reading of his works. To accuse the thought behind *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as overly abstract and simplistic, or as culturally invasive or sectarian, mischaracterize the role of hope, utopia, consciousness and everyday experience, and misunderstand Freire's politics. Allen (2006) and Allen and Rossatto (2009) argue that critical pedagogy, in order to realize its transformative mission, must re-invent itself in the U.S. context to account for the predominately white, privileged teaching force. Freire's critical pedagogy provides a framework for oppression in many forms, be that of race, class, gender, sexuality and or ability. Theorizing specific oppressions was not Freire's intention, and to lambast him for failing to do so creates a strawman of Freire, an easy target. Critical pedagogy needs to reinvent itself only to the extent that those promoting it seek to maintain its hegemony. Opposed to what Allen (2006) asserts, critical pedagogy continues to realize its transformative mission insofar as it inspires movements like critical multiculturalism, critical Indigenous pedagogies and critical whiteness. As Steinberg (2005) writes, Freire "never wanted to be all things to all people" (p. 174), instead asking that "educators...re-create and rewrite my ideas" (Macedo & Freire, 2005, p. x).

While these criticisms are more or less unfounded, the issue of sexist language in a book on the elimination of oppression is ironic. Freire (1994) does not down-play the seriousness of this criticism, nor the importance of language in the continuation of oppressive practices. Freire (1994) writes, "[C]hanging language is part of the process of changing the world" (p. 67). Subsequent editions of Pedagogy of the Oppressed were re-printed with the phrase "women and men" in place of men, an example of Freire's praxis in response to critique. Freire (1994), if it was not already clear enough, adamantly opposed all forms of exploitation. Freire explained the reason behind his initially using the term 'men' to substitute for human as due to the conventions of publishing, which reflect the commonsense social conventions of their time. Freire (1994), in stating that women and men would be used instead of men, asked for forgiveness violating aesthetic norms (p. 68). Even while Freire acknowledged the error and took action to

correct it, he still viewed the phrase as jarring, while many find the opposite just as uncomfortable. While it is inadmissible to continue unreflective language and practice, every person, convention, artifact is formed dialectically within its social and historical context, and ideally continues to change with it: Freire was no exception. It can be tempting to search for perfection, an ideal in leadership, and easy to find flaws in unrealistic expectations.

Rather than ossify the principles of critical pedagogy, Freire encouraged future pedagogues to recreate his ideas (Freire, 2005). The spirit of critical pedagogy demands that it evolve to serve diverse needs for the humanization of education. Critical Indigenous scholarship is one area that has integrated the principles of critical pedagogy to challenge Western ideologies that have historically exploited Indigenous epistemology and culture. Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP), while beyond the scope of this paper, establishes guidelines for research with and for Indigenous peoples, and "seeks to initiate a dialogue...to find common ground between critical theoretical positions...[and] indigenous methodologies" (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p. 563).

Integrating critical pedagogy with non-Western worldviews entails elaborating critical pedagogy's blind spots. Grande (2017) critiques critical pedagogy for uncritically valuing democratic principles as the ultimate and most humanized form of political life, ignoring the concept of sovereignty for Native people. Grande (2017) reviews how democratic ideals have served to undermine tribal life, through governmental actions like the Civilization Act of 1819, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the Dawes Act of 1886, and as manifest in the 400 broken treaties between the U.S. government and Indian tribes from 1778-1871 as a result of colonization (Deyhle, Swisher, Stevans & Trinidad-Galvan, 2008, p. 331).

Additionally, Grande (2017) critiques critical pedagogy's postmodern notion of identity as fluid, arguing that this kind of thinking has been used by Anglos and other non-Native people to falsely claim Native ancestry and to "play Indian" (Deloria, 1998). The notion of fluidity has been used to disparage Native identity and promote its dismantling, rather than to challenge essentialism. Grande

(2017) describes the need for scholarly work that recognizes fluidity while not regressing into boundlessness. Martinez (2010) and Henze and Vanett (1993) question the hegemonic role of the "two-worlds metaphor", arguing it promotes a false equivalency, along with the limitations of the rural/urban dichotomy of Native identity (Martinez, 2010). American Indian identity exists in a complex relation to the U.S. government and the economic superstructure that conditions rural-urban relations, requiring fluid definitions of "Indianness", while also combating the trends of identity appropriation, cultural encroachment, and corporate commodification (Martinez, 2010). For this reason, some Native scholars have remained skeptical of a critical pedagogy, that ironically calls itself "militantly democratic" (Grande, 2017).

Grande (2017) proposes a "red pedagogy" that would confront internalized oppression within native communities, while promoting a theory advocating sovereignty and self-determination. Martinez (2010) proposes the issue of sovereignty and the rural-urban dichotomy are unaccounted for in McCarthy's (1990) framework of nonsynchronous relations, suggesting the concepts of sovereignty and identity as under-theorized areas of domination and contestation. Freire (2013), writing on "militant democracy", clearly did not consider the connotation of that phrase from the perspective of people who have historically experienced a different kind of militant democracy than Freire imagined (p. 52). While he experienced a military Brazil and authoritarian rejection of his work, Freire failed to consider democracy as an historical concept, one subject to special interests and perverse corporate mutations (e.g. *Citizens United*). Native critique and adaptation of critical pedagogy has been underrepresented in the academic literature compared to the very brief, but scathing critique Ellsworth (1989) provides.

While a response to Ellsworth (1989) could be extensive and detailed, for the sake of space I assert her contention that critical pedagogy promotes repressive myths based on rationalist assumptions, abstraction, theorization on student voice, empowerment, dialogue and critical reflection is based on her own false generosity and a limited and distorted understanding of critical pedagogy. Ellsworth

(1989) operated from a place of false generosity, creating the goals and content of the class she writes on as a way to help ease racial tension on the campus, and before meeting students. She did little if anything to address the overt and hidden curriculum of the classroom and school, as well as her own authority and privilege as professor. She impales critical pedagogy as a whole based on a handful of published work (no single work by Freire), and what she sees as its failure to conform to her own assumptions within the confines of a banking pedagogy. Although Ellsworth (1989) makes a valid point about the need for the teacher to consider their own unfreedom, Ellsworth's critique is seriously flawed and superficial insofar as it remains silent on Freire's theorization on exactly this through his discussion of false generosity, radical love and anti-dialogue. Freire (1970, 2005, 2013) wrote extensively on paternalism on the part of the teacher; that Ellsworth (1989) failed to appreciate this is not the fault of critical pedagogy, nor Freire.

As Ellsworth (1989) failed to theorize at the time, critical pedagogy cannot be applied to contexts of schooling like a healing salve. It demands deep personal reflection on how to love. Ross (2017) argues that critical pedagogy has an "educational messiah complex" (p. 611), meaning critical pedagogy gives too much credit to the liberating power of education, as if education will save us alone. This criticism is similar to Anyon's (2011) argument that schools cannot be expected to solve the problems of the economy without economic solutions from government, local communities and industry. Yet, Freire (1970) argued that liberating education cannot wait for power to be handed to the people before being enacted. The power of education and critical consciousness could not bring about a revolution alone, but neither could a revolution happen without it. There is debate among critical pedagogues after Freire as to the possibility of true critical pedagogy in schools. Some state that schools cannot support true critical pedagogy, and that after-school pedagogical sites should be explored (Bishop, 2017), while Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008) state that schools remain important sites for critical pedagogical practice. While the obstacles to critical pedagogy in public schools are considerable and many, public schools—where young

people spend a majority of their lives—should not be abandoned to the forces of privatization, standardization and corporatization of neoliberal policies. Critical pedagogy in public schools can and does subversively resist these trends (Kitts & Peele-Eady, 2019). More research is needed, however, on what this looks like in context.

CONCLUSION

Critical pedagogy in the tradition of Paulo Freire defines humans' experience of being in the world as social-historical, dialogic and hopeful. Knowledge in this tradition is characterized by a problem-posing and embodied quest for self-determination. Politically, critical pedagogy adopts a non-sectarian stance critical of neoliberalism. Re-visiting these concepts in depth —including critiques of them— challenges mischaracterizing critical pedagogy as only about student voice or so-called empowerment. Without this nuanced understanding, the threat of anaesthetized critical pedagogy looms, a portrayal that would serve neoliberal interests well. An accurate understanding of the theory and political stance of critical pedagogy offers educators and scholars a humanist space to reimagine education for liberation, not beholden to sectarian interests on the Right or the Left.

Freire (1994) wanted his method to be recreated according to people's contextual needs for liberation. This recreation indicates something new, not a fault or lack of critical pedagogy itself. Rather than finding fault with critical pedagogy, critical scholars can honor its intentions by building on new critical traditions, as opposed to critiquing the original theory of critical pedagogy out of context.

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