

OCCUPY HONORS EDUCATION

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OCCUPY HONORS EDUCATION

We must see that diversity is much more than a series of practices, processes, and acts: *it is a way of thinking and being that deserves to be conscientiously woven into the fabric of our daily operations and interactions.*

—Finnie D. Coleman
“A Blueprint for Occupying Honors” (332–33)

Theory and Resistance in Honors Education

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The cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy.
—John Dewey (1927/1984) *The Public and Its Problems*

INTRODUCTION

Occupy Wall Street is the name of the political protest that started in New York, New York, in September 2011, and morphed into an ongoing global political action movement. Occupy seeks not simply to shift the content of political discourse but to reframe the way in which American democracy is structured as a more participatory process, representative of the diversity of voices that constitute society. It intends to replace traditional political hierarchies with participatory structures that enable community members to actualize their unique voice and contribute to social change. According to its website, the Occupy Movement has articulated the following Principles of Solidarity underpinning its actions:

- Engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy;
- Exercising personal and collective responsibility;

- Recognizing individuals' inherent privilege and the influence it has on all interactions;
- Empowering one another against all forms of oppression;
- Redefining how labor is valued;
- The sanctity of individual privacy;
- The belief that education is human right; and
- Making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute. (Principles of Solidarity, 2012)

As a self-described leaderless movement, Occupy challenges citizens to engage in democracy in robust and direct ways, and, as a result, to reconceptualize their relationship with and responsibility to society. It also questions and actively seeks to dismantle the deep influence of corporate capitalism and the neoliberal logic of commodification, self-interest, and profit in democratic life, arguing that these forces are antithetical to the goals of democratic participation, free thought, and both individual and communal justice.

Raising the question of how we might occupy honors education in transformative and revolutionary ways is a complex and challenging question, which includes examining traditional ways of organizing the micro-contexts of education, including classroom design, teacher-student relationships, curricular structures, testing and grading expectations, and course content. It also levies critiques regarding the macro-contexts of education, such as research ethics and the role of higher education in culture. The goal of this essay is to problematize the structures and infrastructures of the traditional university from the standpoint of the Occupy Movement as a way to open up space for re-imagining the functions, purposes, and structures of honors education. I will first describe neoliberalism and its influence on the philosophy and structure of traditional schooling. I then offer a critique of traditional approaches to education and consider the role and impact of honors education in light of this critique.

NEOLIBERAL LOGIC

Any critical analysis of schooling must pay close attention to the logic of the larger social structure in which the university is embedded. In the United States, particularly since the late 1970s and early 1980s, that wider structure has been governed by the logic of neoliberalism, which is an interconnected system of political and economic policies and practices that seeks to establish deregulated, privatized, and competitive markets in all domains of society. It is this very neoliberal paradigm that Occupy attempts to resist, and it is one that is swiftly encroaching on systems of education throughout the United States.

Neoliberalism, the logic of post-industrial, global capitalism, serves as the principle by which all social and political relations are structured. Neoliberal thought is a reconceptualization of classical liberalism, but it differs in important ways. Both classical liberalism and neoliberalism share a number of presuppositions, including a belief that individuals are ultimately self-interested and share a desire to support marketplace economics, a commitment to limiting state regulation, and an emphasis on free trade. Yet, as Mark Olssen and Michael Peters (1995) argue:

Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power . . . neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market. . . . [I]n neoliberalism the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. (p. 315)

In contrast, classical liberalism relies on a boundary and balance between, on one hand, public institutions and civic life and, on the other, the capital market. This relationship is expressed through the concept of the social contract. Here, the marketplace is viewed as contained within the economic domain of society, as a way of guaranteeing all individuals equal access to the fundamental rights and freedoms of all other dimensions of citizenship.

Classical liberalism holds there are dimensions of civic life that exist outside the marketplace to which the market is indebted, as expressed via a tax system supporting the public sphere. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, seeks the elimination of the social contract, as well as the reduction of all dimensions of citizenship to marketplace values via the privatization of the public sphere. According to Erik Malewski and Nathalia Jaramillo (2011), neoliberal thinking results in “a blend of increased privatization, government cutbacks, deregulation of business and industry, and increased international trade” (p. 13). This mindset “underwrites the conditions by which those who utilize entitlement programs . . . are demonized without regard for the subject positions available to them” (p. 13). Here, civic rights, viewed from the logic of profit, become “entitlements” stolen from society by the economically unproductive. Further, in the context of neoliberalism, all non-marketplace activities are not only considered suspect but also as an opportunity for commodification and profit.

The neoliberal paradigm of commodification, self-interest, and profit considers itself to be a value-neutral space that should be imposed on all domains of society. Ironically, while market-based principles are imagined as operating in a “free,” self-regulating space, a neoliberal regime relies on the active management of legislative policies by corporate interests. As Graham Burchell (1996) argues, “the rational principle for regulating and limiting governmental activity must be determined by reference to *artificially* arranged and contrived forms of free, *entrepreneurial* and *competitive* conduct of economic-rational individuals” (pp. 23–24, emphasis in original). The goal of such management is to benefit persons and institutions in power through reducing competition, maximizing corporate profit, and reducing worker and citizen empowerment, while offering the illusion of free choice and individual agency. As Olssen and Peters (1995) argue, markets “were traditionally important in classical economics, and formed as an essential part of the welfare state, for regulating private entrepreneurial conduct in the public sphere of society. Under neoliberalism, markets have become a new technology by which control can be effected and performance

enhanced, in the public sector” (p. 316). Neoliberalism views the accumulation of capital as both the process and goal of society. As a result, it reduces all human relations and constructions to a simple economic exchange value, believing that economic utility is the sole indicator of value. This reduction has the further, and perhaps more dangerous, effect of reducing democracy to capitalism.

THE NEW MANAGERIALISM

While the market is imagined as a place for the free exchange of ideas that fosters creativity and divergent thinking, neoliberalism depends on administrating society in such a way that the system and its intellectual, economic, and political underpinnings are not subject to critique or interrogation. In this system, creativity, intelligence, and persons serve as capital commodities whose sole purpose is to extend the scope of the institutions they serve. As Olssen and Peters (1995) state further: “the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of *auditing, accounting, and management*” (pg. 315, emphasis in original). Neoliberalism requires a kind of new managerialism of employees, which, on one hand classifies persons in a system and, on the other hand, constitutes a set of methods that ensures the progress of this social ordering. The common language of such managerial approaches stresses concepts such as outputs, outcomes, accountability, measurement, improvement, and quality. For Olssen and Peters, the core dimensions of this logic include flexibility (i.e., the elimination of the long-term obligation of the employer to the employee), clearly defined objectives (i.e., behavioral outputs that benefit the institution), and a results orientation (i.e., the measurement of worker production for the purposes of profit) (pp. 322–24). The goal of such a system is to limit critical and creative thinking to that which supports the system as a whole. Thus mobility and freedom become domesticated.

As a result of neoliberal policies and practices, the university increasingly serves the interest of the corporate sector and is

modeled in its image. As Daniel Saunders (2010) argues, it has transformed the guiding logic of the university from serving the public good through knowledge production and the cultivation of an informed citizenry to a marketplace mentality organized in the same way as a traditional business, with faculty becoming knowledge workers and students becoming knowledge consumers (p. 54).

This business model has created a new pattern of employment, such as fixed-term contracts and new forms of accountability, in which employee products are more clearly defined and frequently reviewed. The emphasis on management, transparency, and accountability signals an overt acknowledgement of one of the central premises of the neoliberal system: a distrust of professional practitioners who might critique or overturn the system. The classical liberal system allowed and, in fact, encouraged professions to become institutional communities that maintained and cultivated field-specific knowledge and were grounded in self-governing systems. By contrast, in the neoliberal system, as Olssen and Peters (2005) maintain, governance is structured between principles and agents, which not only erodes, but actively seeks to prohibit an autonomous space for the emergence of theory, criticism, and new forms of practice (p. 324).

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The rise of neoliberal logic emerged concurrently with the shift from an industrial to a knowledge economy. As a result, major research universities are now viewed as an emerging source of capital rather than as institutions serving the public good. According to Peters (2009), state and federal policies increasingly emphasize university practices that develop closer relationships between education and industry (pp. 1–2), and Olssen and Peters (2005) identify this realignment as catalyzed by research produced by think tanks and economic development agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (p. 333).

The World Bank, for example, maintains a “Knowledge for Development” program and describes the four pillars of the knowledge economy as follows:

- An economic and institutional regime that provides incentives for the efficient use of existing and new knowledge and the flourishing of entrepreneurship.
- An educated and skilled population that can create, share, and use knowledge well.
- An efficient innovation system of firms, research centers, universities, think tanks, consultants, and other organizations that can tap into the growing stock of global knowledge, assimilate and adapt it to local needs, and create new technology.
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that can facilitate the effective communication, dissemination, and processing of information. (World Bank, 2013)

To support this process, the World Bank (2013) has developed the Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), which, its website notes, “measures a country’s ability to generate, adopt and diffuse knowledge and also whether the environment is conducive for knowledge to be used effectively for economic development.” Knowledge exists as a commodity appraised exclusively by its exchange value. Further, knowing and knowledge production become entrepreneurial skills and forms of capital to be deployed only within the context of the free market.

HONORS AS AN OCCUPATION

The role of honors within the context of an increasingly neoliberal university system is complex and paradoxical. From one perspective, honors develops and reinforces neoliberal ideology in the context of the university. Honors students often represent the privileged class on our campuses, who are chosen (at least in part) based on their ability to excel relative to normative academic standards.¹ Honors students are (metaphorically and often literally) the 1%. As part of their experience, they receive special sets of services and privileges not available to the wider campus, which

is particularly paradoxical on public campuses whose mission is to serve students equally. Honors might also be viewed simply as a method to incentivize student-consumers attending the university. Here, honors becomes the way in which colleges and universities recruit and retain top candidates, an academic showpiece reduced to the tangible benefits afforded to select candidates at the university. Lastly, if top undergraduate students are placed into narrowly defined research activities without providing a sustained critique of the social, political, and ethical implications of university research, honors might be doing little more than fueling the educational-industrial complex.

Yet, on the other hand, honors may be one of the few spaces left within the context of mass education where students have the opportunity to experience a transformational education. This is possible because honors often stands outside otherwise deeply entrenched university structures as it seeks to maintain a focus on academic discourse, personal engagement with ideas, and the understanding of relationships between and among disciplinary modes of knowing. It also actively cultivates meaningful relationships between faculty and undergraduate students, which is increasingly rare on college campuses. Rather than consisting of a standard curriculum for generic knowers, it often actively works to cultivate critical capacity for unique learners. In this scenario, honors becomes a site of resistance to an otherwise utilitarian education.

The tension facing honors in the university is similar to that of Occupy in culture, yielding a strong family resemblance between the two. Both attempt to create a space for the rich growth of unique individuals within a system increasingly focused on the domestication and exploitation of the talents, skills, and goals of individuals. Both struggle with the paradox of having to resist the neoliberal logic of the system while being forced to operate within that logic in order to survive and thrive.

Occupy does not simply seek to innovate within a pre-determined democratic ordering system but instead to critique and actively resist the platform on which current political action occurs. In doing so, it aims to overturn systems of oppression masked

as agents of democracy. Similarly, if honors understands itself as a laboratory that pushes the university forward, then this call to occupy honors education is about much more than simply creating innovative course content; rather, it demands that honors actively re-imagine the entire context and structure of university education. Otherwise, the call for innovation in honors remains domesticated, at the beck and call of the larger, neoliberal ordering of the system.

Occupy has refused the governing logic of the system and instead worked to develop new logics and new modes of participation. According to Peter Cohan (2011), this is why the media has repeatedly struggled to classify Occupy and to understand its critique within the context of the existing social and political order. Occupy has also developed creative ways to use the logic of the system in order to form pockets of resistance and create spaces for freedom and justice. For example, a recent initiative of Occupy is the Rolling Jubilee, in which Occupiers purchase outstanding medical debts traded on the debt market. Typically, agencies that enforce the debt collection purchase these debts at a fraction of the cost, creating a kind of legal bondage of the debtor to the agent. Instead of collecting the debt it purchases, Occupy abolishes it. The goal of the Rolling Jubilee (2013) project is to “liberate debtors at random through a campaign of mutual support, good will, and collective refusal. Debt resistance is just the beginning.” As of the writing of this chapter, the Rolling Jubilee has abolished nearly \$15,000,000 dollars in debt at a cost of \$700,000 dollars.² The Rolling Jubilee serves as an example of the kind of creative resistance to which honors should aspire.

Similarly, honors educators should work to resist the neoliberal logic encroaching on education in order to restore scholarly professionalism and to create systems in which rich, democratic education might occur. This aspiration is, in fact, already part of the culture of honors. The “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program,” listed on the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) website (NCHC 2010) include the notion that honors can and should serve “as a laboratory within which faculty feel welcome to experiment with new subjects, approaches, and

pedagogies. When proven successful, such efforts in curriculum and pedagogical development can serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus.” Here, honors views itself as a site of innovation and creativity within the context of the wider university. Yet, the call to creative resistance requires not simply innovation within the context of the current system, but actively generating theories of resistance as a community of scholar-practitioners in order to develop practices and participatory structures that seek to encourage, enable, and empower students to take ownership over their education and become critically conscious.

HONORS AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The immediate and perhaps most difficult challenge of this call to occupation is not the lack of human or financial resources in most honors programs but the lack of theoretical resources. University faculty often, though not always, assume that educational and pedagogical practices do not require the same level of theoretical engagement as research within the context of their discipline. Such a perspective, according to Garrison (1995), views pedagogy as a form of “telling” the plain facts in which the teacher plays the role of a conduit between disciplinary knowledge and the awaiting learner (p. 727). To an even greater degree, according to Stoller (2016), administration is viewed as a non-theoretical space where the daily, habitual tasks of management are carried out (pp. 39–46).

Yet if we hope to develop practical forms of resistance and to generate productive forms of participatory inquiry in honors, deeper and more nuanced theories of post-secondary systems are needed. It is the theoretical that allows us to clarify, articulate, and begin to change the practical. In the context of honors, this means that administrators must approach their appointments with the same level of scholarly and theoretical gravity as disciplinary-specific research. Here, the shift from disciplinary scholar to honors administrator requires a shift in scholarly activities.

Honors literature and conference proceedings, like most administrative networks, skew heavily toward presenting practical

applications divorced from theoretical grounds. The reasons why particular practices work in a given context, or how those practices can be reconstructed for use on divergent campuses, remain submerged. It is only through thoughtful theoretical analysis that we will be able to discriminate between “best practices” and those that are simply the most used. It is also the only way to develop a language of resistance to the neoliberal structures that are both infiltrating post-secondary systems and antithetical to the goals of deep education. Here, I offer critical pedagogy as one potential entry point for this type of scholarly theorizing and engagement.

Critical pedagogy emerges from within the larger body of critical theory literature. Critical theory attempts not simply to describe the patterns, norms, and ordering principles of societies and social institutions but to go beyond the descriptive to the normative. It attempts not simply to describe society but to critique its structures as a vehicle toward citizen empowerment and social justice. As Henry Giroux (1997) argues, critical pedagogies “are not simply concerned with how teachers and students view knowledge; they are also concerned with the mechanisms of social control and how these mechanisms function to legitimate the beliefs and values underlying wider society institutional arrangements” (p. 4). They seek not simply to transmit what is known about the world but to empower the creative capacities of students in such a way that every person has an equal opportunity to be free.

Some core assumptions that might generally be held by critical theorists include the beliefs that:

- patterns of thought and disciplinary paradigms, including those of the natural sciences, are governed by power relations, that themselves are historically contingent;
- facts can never be isolated from values; therefore there is no such thing as value-neutral data;
- language is central to the formation of subjectivity; therefore linguistic and theoretical resources shape consciousness;

- in any system particular groups are privileged over others, and oppression is most dangerous when oppressed groups uncritically accept their status as a form of the natural ordering of society;
- traditional forms of research often reproduce or reinforce systems of oppression or unjust societies.

From a critical theoretical perspective, the university has been seduced and co-opted by a kind of technocratic and utilitarian rationality, devoid of concern for the human condition, and we have only ourselves to blame. We have participated in and reproduced the process through which, as Giroux (1997) argues, the notion of progress “was stripped of its concern with ameliorating the human condition and became applicable only to the realm of material and technical growth. What was once considered humanly possible, a question involving values and human ends, was now reduced to the issue of what was technically possible” (p. 8).

Unless we intervene, this logic will continue to erode our institutions as rich, democratic spaces and will eventually deprofessionalize our fields, transforming the university into a domesticated resource serving an economic production function.³

Critical pedagogy becomes an approach to education that analyzes and actively challenges systems of domination, including empowering students to become critically conscious about the culturally and historically conditioned beliefs, practices, and systems that oppress and restrict their thoughts, choices, and actions. Critical pedagogy was first articulated by Paulo Freire in his 1970 text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he argued that traditional forms of schooling are based on the idea that pedagogy is simply a transmission of information (i.e., positive, objective facts) between teacher and learner. While this mode of pedagogy has traditionally been viewed as a value-neutral act, Freire argues otherwise. Freire labels traditional pedagogical thinking as the *banking system* of education.

In the banking environment, “knowns” (e.g., data, theories, skills) are assumed to be separate, autonomous, and discrete from the knower. The learner is positioned as a consumer of context-free

and objective factoids, and emphasis is placed on the ability of the learner to reproduce those factoids as the sole marker of educational success. Reciprocally, teachers perceived as data managers are expected to deliver educational content in the most efficient manner possible. In this model, Freire (1970/2000) argues:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only so far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (p. 72)

In the banking model, learning is defined exclusively as behavior modification for an external reviewer, such as that expressed by the assessment movement in post-secondary education in which faculty members are required to design their classes around pre-determined “learning outcomes.”⁴

Establishing the goals of learning at the outset sets up a type of instructional teleology in which Shirley Grundy (1987) argues “the product will conform to the *eidōs* (that is, the intentions or ideas) expressed in the original objectives” (p. 12). The result is a teaching environment free of experimental inquiry, risk, failure, and creativity, but which produces the behavior modifications demanded by outside administrators, legislators, and corporate stakeholders. Here, the teacher-student relationship is viewed as top-down and one-directional. Knowledge is viewed as a collection of dislocated facts, information, or skills that are “deposited” by the expert on the ignorant student.⁵

In the banking model, as David Granger (2003) argues, “the inherently uncertain process of teaching and learning, or interacting with concrete human beings” becomes “carefully controlled artificial conditions” in which “individual learning, discrete facts, standards, high-stakes paper-and-pencil tests, and other paraphernalia of positivism hold sway” (p. 151). The aim of the banking

model, then, has nothing to do with critical awareness, creative thinking, exploration, or democratic citizenship but, instead, with the socialization of citizen-workers. This is because, as Giroux (1983/2001) maintains, “in the guise of objectivity and neutrality, [knowledge] is fixed and unchanging in the sense that its form, structure, and underlying normative assumptions appear to be universalized beyond the realm of historical contingency or critical analysis” (p. 178). Students come to see the world and knowledge as something to be digested in obedience to a teacher for whom they are made to perform. The danger, according to Freire (1970/2000), is that “in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge” (p. 72). The banking model is not only incorrect in its thinking about teaching and learning, but also—and more importantly—actually harms students who are alienated from their own creative capacities (i.e., dehumanized) in the very process of schooling.

Here it is important to clarify that this is not a critique of the traditional classroom lecture, although that pedagogical method often embodies the problems of the banking model education. In fact, it is not a critique of any particular pedagogical method, but instead it is a critique of the *guiding logic* of the system that produces pedagogical methods. The issue, then, is with a view of “knowledge” as a body of static data-sets and knowing as a kind of mental state that allows for the reproduction of those facts. It is a problem both with the disconnection of knowledge from inquiry and knowing from embodied action. Dewey (1916/1980) identifies the consequences of this paradigm:

“Knowledge,” in the sense of information, means the working capital, the indispensable resources, of further inquiry; of finding out, or learning, more things. Frequently it is treated as an end in itself, and then the goal becomes to heap it up and display it when called for. This static, cold-storage ideal of knowledge is inimical to educative development. It not only lets occasions for thinking go unused, but it swamps thinking. No one could construct a house on ground cluttered with miscellaneous junk. Pupils who have

stored their “minds” with all kinds of material which they have never put to intellectual uses are sure to be hampered when they try to think. They have no practice in selecting what is appropriate, and no criterion to go by; everything is on the same dead static level. (p. 165)

In most traditional schooling environments, learning is understood as a generic act of cognition having nothing to do with inquiry, transformation, or change because knowledge is viewed as a reified object, universally available to all learners regardless of their contexts, goals, or capacities. Thus the end-goal of education becomes knowledge (e.g., information, data) rather than transformation emerging from communal action.

As a critique of pedagogical *logic* rather than *method*, it is important to note that many (though not all) of the experiential and experimental pedagogies already being cultivated in honors resist what Freire describes as banking-style education. The problem is that without a clearly articulated theoretical ground, faculty deploying those pedagogies do not always have a critical language to guide their methodological decision-making. It is also possible (and perhaps likely) that even pedagogically innovative honors faculty might actually be participating in what Freire would describe as acts of oppression if they view pedagogy as an act of telling rather than co-creation.

While the banking system creates persons who might hold an arbitrary body of skills or knowledge, as Freire (1970/2000) argues, those persons are “alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic” (p. 72). This result happens because freedom, in the neoliberal sense, is a form of self-interest. It is the freedom *not* to participate, or *not* to be invested in the concerns of the community. Freire rejected this notion of freedom, instead arguing that true freedom is understanding and having the capacity to overcome the terms of one’s own subjectification. Freedom is coming to critical consciousness about how the system restricts, disempowers, and directs the flow of persons and knowledge. Freedom is also working to change the system so that all persons might have the capacity to be free. Freedom is, therefore, both a form of and the result of political action.

Far from being value-neutral, Freire understands the banking system as a form of ideology and oppression. The banking model virtually eliminates the dialogue and relationality necessary for developing the critical consciousness that would allow students and teachers to become aware of the hegemonic structures of domination. The banking model does not simply keep students from becoming aware of hegemony, it actively reinforces systems of domination and oppression.

Freire believes that the banking system does not simply trap students, but it also entangles teachers because it erases the dialectical relationality that leads to critical consciousness and continued growth for students and teachers alike. To the contrary, as Freire (1970/2000) argues, teachers' "efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. . . . To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them" (p. 75). This dialogical encounter as pedagogy goes far to erase the system of power on which traditional schooling is based and, in turn, creates a system based on love, because, as Freire (1970/2000) argues, "love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation" (p. 89).

As Giroux (1983/2001) argues, school should be a "site for creating a critical discourse around the forms a democratic society might take and the socioeconomic forces that might prevent such forms from emerging" (p. 116). Therefore, critical pedagogy must "connect learning to social change, scholarship to commitment, and classroom knowledge to public life" (p. 117). Giroux calls, then, for a pedagogy for the opposition:

Rather than celebrating objectivity and consensus, teachers must place the notions of critique and conflict at the center of their pedagogical models. Within such a perspective, greater possibilities exist for developing an understanding of the role power plays in defining and distributing the knowledge and social relationships that mediate the school and classroom experience. Critique must become a vital

pedagogical tool not only because it breaks through the mystifications and distortions that “silently” work behind the labels and routines of school practice, but also because it models a form of resistance and oppositional pedagogy. (p. 62)

Giroux calls for schools in which students resist increasingly neo-liberal policies and practices that support the view that schools are businesses designed to create skilled workers; he urges that schools and teachers instead embrace a model of critical consciousness raising.

PRIMARY CONCERNS FOR THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGUE

In the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to articulate some of the primary concerns for the critical pedagogue. Here I am not restricting the concept of pedagogy simply to the limited venue of the formal classroom space. Instead, pedagogical thinking should be the organizing principle of the entire educational paradigm, particularly within the context of honors education. Critical pedagogy extends well beyond the classroom environment and becomes a lens through which all educational activity, including administrative and co-curricular activity, can be viewed. In this final section, I outline these concerns in six parts:

- Part 1, **Power/Knowledge**, articulates how honors must be sensitive to and, as much as possible, expose the powerlessness of knowledge and knowing.
- Part 2, **The Agency of Learners**, argues that in order for students to emerge as democratically engaged citizens, they must be given opportunities to take active, engaged, and risk-filled stances within their own educative process.
- Part 3, **Academic and Administrative Freedom**, claims that honors faculty must demand forms of educational freedom in all domains of their practice.

- Part 4, **Participatory Structures and Pedagogies**, argues that honors must strive for educational environments and shared decision-making processes that include a diversity of voices and standpoints.
- Part 5, **Freedom through Justice**, claims that the working out of human freedom can only be accomplished through tying inquiry and educative practice to a striving for social and environmental justice.
- Part 6, **Pedagogy as a Form of Friendship**, argues that this kind of applicability to human need can only be held as a value within an environment that encourages the diverse expression of experience grounded in meaningful relationships.

PART 1: POWER/KNOWLEDGE

Critical pedagogy is sensitive to the relationship between power and knowledge. It also actively works to dismantle systems of oppression created by the relationship between the two. For critical theorists, the creation of a disinterested expert culture, including the hierarchy of expertise, can quickly become antithetical to the goals of deep democracy and critical consciousness. Further, the creation of such a culture is intertwined with the emergence of the modern research university and the nature of increasingly narrow disciplinary cultures.⁶

Yet the powerladedness of knowledge is rarely, if ever, made overt within the context of the classroom or within university hierarchy and policymaking, in part because it would disrupt the managerial culture of the university. Therefore, we must find ways to center educational practice (e.g., pedagogy, the co-curriculum, and administrative decision-making) on creating democratically engaged environments that include shared decision-making and problem-based practices that expose systems of oppression embedded in and supported by university practices. We must also investigate and work to change university practices that create and sustain systems of domination and oppression. For example, we must place questions of justice at the center of our university

discourse: Are all university employees paid a living wage? Does university research ultimately benefit the democratic public rather than corporate or private interests? Are university holdings, including its endowment and pensions, invested in areas committed to ethical, sustainable practices? Is the campus representative and supportive of diverse groups and practices?

In the context of pedagogical practice, knowledge must always be connected to form larger sets of social, cultural, ethical, and political contexts. Constructing democratic pedagogies in this way requires that teachers include students in the process of knowledge creation in order to develop their own creative capacities and expose students to the cultural and social implications of knowledge, requiring them both to participate as *stance takers* within that process.

PART 2: THE AGENCY OF LEARNERS

The question of agency is a complex concern that draws together the role of the teacher, the capacities of learners, and the place of democracy as an organizing principle within education.

Critical pedagogy challenges the banking view that the role of students is to be passive consumers and that education is something enacted upon them. To the contrary, developing a participatory pedagogy necessitates that all participants must be empowered to have a voice and an active role in all decisions that affect them. This requires that students be given opportunities to take stances within their own educative process, including on things like course and curriculum development, participatory research opportunities, and support and credit for activities outside the boundaries of formal systems. It is important here to note that giving students agency is not the same thing as allowing them to dictate the terms of their education (i.e., viewing them as educational consumers), but instead it means democratizing pedagogical spaces in ways that emphasize dialogue, debate, and reconstruction.

This charge calls into question the role of the teacher, viewing teachers and learners as participating within and operating in the same spectrum of creative inquiry. Rather than the distinct concepts

of “teacher” and “learner,” it would be better to imagine students as “novice learners” and faculty as “master learners.” This redistribution of power is a two-way street, and, as Freire (1970/2000) argues, “It is essential for the oppressed to realize that when they accept the struggle for humanization they also accept, from that moment, their total responsibility for their struggle” (p. 68). In this way, giving students agency is more closely related to empowered mentorship through shared struggle.

This charge also is a call toward developing deeper and more intentional communities of inquiry at the university rather than viewing faculty and student life as ontologically separate spaces. Instead, university life should be centered on common problems and emerge through communal forms of inquiry. Yet, in order for these communal forms of inquiry to take place, tenure and promotion processes, pedagogies, and departments must be reimagined from competitive to cooperative structures.

PART 3: ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE FREEDOM

The powerladenness of knowing and knowledge also requires that, both in terms of its administrative and research activities, honors educators resist discourses and practices that serve the institutional structures that construct and reinforce systems of oppression. This resistance requires that honors educators call for academic freedom in ways that reach beyond the increasingly narrow lines drawn by neoliberal policies that result in a domesticated form of academic freedom.⁷

Without this call for academic freedom, developing participatory educational structures is not possible. Practices of academic freedom might then include, but are not limited to, developing active and creative forms of resistance to the contemporary assessment movement, which is grounded in neoliberal social ordering. Assessment demands that educational systems justify their existence in the terms of a reductionist, economic input-output model, which is antithetical to the goals of participatory and inquiry-based pedagogies. Like the model of the Rolling Jubilee, a new assessment model might take the form of revisioning simplistic outcomes-based

assessment as a form of action research in order to fuse the research and practice-based missions embedded in most honors programs.⁸

Administrative freedom also means actively developing the scholar-practitioner model for honors faculty and staff. All faculty and staff positions in honors should embody the life of the mind in both scope and practice through an equal balance of innovative and ongoing teaching, continual research and publication, and the creative administration of educational environments.

PART 4: PARTICIPATORY STRUCTURES AND PEDAGOGIES

For critical pedagogues, schools should be fundamentally democratic spheres. In order for school to serve the interests of a pluralistic, participatory democracy, we must first acknowledge, as Giroux (1997) does, that “schools are ‘reproductive’ in that they provide different classes and social groups with forms of knowledge, skills, and culture that not only legitimate the dominant culture but also track students into a labor force differentiated by gender, racial, and class considerations” (p. 119). Secondly, we must actively work to create forms of consciousness raising and democratic practices within its structures, including both pedagogical and administrative spaces.

In doing so, we must strive for educational environments and decision-making processes that are heterogeneous. Heterogeneity is a concept that attempts to reach beyond the contemporary notion of “diversity,” which is often conceptualized as simple exposure to difference. (For additional definitions of diversity, see F. Coleman in this volume, pp. 320–24.) Heterogeneity, on the other hand, is a much richer and more difficult concept. It attempts to embed difference within communities of knowers, theories of understanding, and *processes of* knowledge creation and decision-making. It is not just something discussed as a form of enrichment, but something that is practiced in teaching and research activities. It also demands that exposure to difference must include discussions of structured inequality, power, and oppression, as well as engaged, justice-seeking action on our campuses and in our communities.

Heterogeneity is a primary constituting element of authentic democratic life. Helen Longino (1994) writes that we must resist a world where “difference must be ordered, one type chosen as the standard and all others seen as failed or incomplete versions” (p. 447). Instead, we must view difference as fertile ground. In this way, as Longino (1994) writes, heterogeneity “permits equal standing for different types, and mandates investigation of the details of such difference” (p. 477). Heterogeneity is also an overt rejection of standardized and managerial forms of schooling that force unique persons into generic curricula.

Charlene Haddock Seigfried (1993) sees heterogeneity as striving for a kind of “principled pluralism” (p. 2). For John Dewey (1925/1981) the view that knowledge is stable and universal

demands a rationalistic temperament leading to a fixed and dogmatic attitude. Pluralism, on the other hand, leaves room for contingency, liberty, novelty, and gives complete liberty of action to the empirical method, which can be indefinitely extended. It accepts unity where it finds it, but it does not attempt to force the vast diversity of events and things into a single rational mold. (p. 8)

In order to create generative educational environments, this kind of balance, as much as possible, must be maintained and bring forward, rather than silence, the deep differences already embedded in classrooms and the wider university community.

PART 5: FREEDOM THROUGH JUSTICE

For critical theory, education is ultimately about humanization, the construction of critical consciousness, and the freedom of persons. Here, freedom is neither one’s buying power nor an endowed capability located at the core of the individual, but freedom is something for which one strives through an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction of the self and the world. Freedom is the lifelong practice of education. Freire (1970/2000) writes:

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 51)

Education must be grounded in reflective, intelligent action in the world. This is the only way for knowledge to yield a transformation. To know something is both to have transformed it and to be transformed by it in the process. The implication is that human freedom can only be accomplished through tying inquiry and educative practice to striving for social and environmental justice. In order to move toward critical forms of education, pedagogies and educational practices must emerge out of and demonstrate applicability to human and environmental need.

Just as Dewey understood knowledge as *emerging from* the lived experiences of human beings in the world, he also believed that whenever any theory was separated from the entrenched realities of lived experience, it fundamentally misunderstood the problem on which it is focused. Knowledge is, then, rooted in the lived experience of human beings transacting in their environment. It is also distributed across multiple ways of understanding and making meaning. This diversity becomes best actualized in a democratic system.

PART 6: PEDAGOGY AS A FORM OF FRIENDSHIP

Applicability to human need can only be held as a value within a pedagogical environment that encourages the diverse expression of experience grounded in meaningful relationships. This includes going beyond advising students or administrating courses and toward developing authentic mentoring relationships among students, faculty, and staff, as well as creating environments and cultures where relationships can be fostered in meaningful ways.

It was Dewey's contention that meaning, knowing, and, in fact, being were all intersubjective concepts that take shape within the context of a community of inquiry. This kind of relational structure is not simply cognitive, it is intuitive, emotional, and felt. It is grounded not simply in justice viewed as the reduction or redistribution of power but also constituted by authentic friendship.

Here, we must ask ourselves if the temporal and physical architectures of our universities support the cultivation of truly authentic friendships and mentoring relationships. I contend that neoliberalism demands overly structured and managed forms of interaction among students, faculty, and administrators, which are now so ubiquitous in most universities they have become normalized. Reciprocally, the rich, serendipitous moments of democratic relationship may only rarely occur. More often, faculty and student interactions must be organized via programming models and assessed to ensure they occur. In this way, these interactions may become mechanical, stale, and lifeless.

Critical pedagogy argues that we must work to cultivate organic friendships via the construction of spaces where serendipitous relationships may occur. This first requires the creation of public spaces (e.g., coffee houses, reading rooms) where such interactions might take place. (See West in this volume pp. 199–213.) It also requires the reconceptualization of faculty and staff time so that time spent dialoguing with students is again viewed as a meaningful and necessary part of our roles. Most importantly, meaningful friendships can only occur in an educative culture grounded in true curiosity and empowered learning, where dialogue becomes a vehicle to student growth. In the strictly neoliberal university, which is centered on academic performance, time to degree, and what it labels "student success," this kind of interaction has no place. Yet, for honors, it should be the very process and goal of education.

CONCLUSION

To occupy honors education is to practice and theorize in the manner of the Occupy Movement itself. Neoliberalism as an ideology and cultural movement is swiftly encroaching on American

universities, constricting and commodifying the educational process of students and the knowledge-building and teaching activities of university faculty. Thus a parallel exists between the work of Occupy in culture and the work of honors in the university. If honors education hopes to critique, resist, and ultimately overturn neoliberal forces, it must develop a theoretical language to ground its practice. Critical pedagogy, as both a theory and method, begins this task through the six central concerns of critical pedagogues outlined above.

Neoliberalism is not a passing educational fad. It will ultimately dismantle the deeply democratic and human elements of higher education if we, as faculty, do not see ourselves as having a responsibility to resist its presence in our institutions and culture. This is not a naïve attempt to reclaim an imagined and idealized past in university education but a call for faculty to understand their responsibility, in a very concrete way, to the campuses and institutions in which they are embedded. It is a call to construct new forms of education that move beyond cold knowing to empathy, compassion, mutual understanding, freedom, and justice.

NOTES

¹According to Grissmer (2000), the effectiveness of standardized tests like the SAT for predicting college aptitude or intellectual ability has repeatedly been questioned (p. 224). Yet, honors programs continue to rely on such scores as a valid method of screening applicants, often not allowing students who rank below pre-determined numerical scores to apply. For an alternative view on admissions criteria, see Jones in this volume, pp. 33–79. For more on “honors privilege,” see Dzieszinski, Camarena, and Homrich-Knieling in this volume, pp. 81–106.

²For the most current figures, see <<http://rollingjubilee.org>>.

³This logic is manifested, for example, in the debate about the purpose and viability of the humanities within the university (see American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *The Heart of the Matter*, 2013). In particular, the humanities are often forced to articulate

themselves in terms of economic utility in order to prove their value, rather than being accepted as a necessary part of a healthy democracy. Another example can be found in the increased use of learning outcomes and assessment measures designed to guarantee to shareholders (i.e., legislators, outside administrators, business leaders, parents, students) a return on investment.

⁴With limited space available in this essay, I am regrettably unable to offer a full critique of the destructive effects of learning outcomes on students and student learning. For more on the issue of learning outcomes, I refer readers to Bennett and Brady, 2012; Hussey and Smith, 2002; Hussey and Smith, 2003; Rees, 2004.

⁵One might argue that constructivist approaches to education require the very thing Freire critiques: a solid factual “base” on which students can develop an understanding of a subject or phenomenon. Freire and John Dewey (referenced below) offer a view of learning that provides an alternative to the traditional constructivist paradigms that dominate mainstream views on and approaches to education and pedagogy. Freire’s epistemology questions the power structures that establish and facilitate “correct” knowledge or growth. Freire also argues one cannot truly know until a literal, material praxis (action-reflection) in culture has occurred. For a deeper articulation of Freire’s epistemology, see Au, 2007.

From a Deweyan perspective, constructivist paradigms are grounded in cognitive psychological models that retain troubling elements of philosophical foundationalism. Dewey’s most important articulation of the difference between his own theory and that of traditional strands in cognitive and behavioral psychology is outlined in his essay “The Reflex Arc Concept In Psychology” (Dewey, 1897/1972). For an extended discussion on the differences between Dewey’s epistemology and contemporary constructivist paradigms, please refer to Garrison, 1995; Phillips, 1995; and Vanderstraeten, 2002.

⁶From a critical theoretical perspective, a potential danger to democracy presented by the emergence of the academy and its specialized disciplines is the separation of knowledge from the

public sphere. This separation has the potential to present knowledge and knowing as a form of activity reserved for an elite class. To the contrary, Judith Green (1999) argues that philosophy, for example, should be understood not as a “narrowly specialized academic discipline, but rather [as] *a set of public tasks* undertaken for the transformative purpose of *human liberation and well-being* by those who share *an overlapping set of skills and techniques*” (p. 218, emphasis in original).

⁷What I mean by “increasingly narrow lines” is the narrowing scope of the category of academic freedom itself. The notion of “academic freedom” is generally allowable for social, cultural, and political critique published inside academic journals because it is a sort of quasi-private domain that does not generally impact public activity. Yet, that same notion of academic freedom is not extended in other, more public domains. This narrowing of freedom includes the restriction of public scholarship activities (see Moxley, 2013). In this way, the notion of “academic freedom” becomes domesticated because it does not apply equally to all domains of scholarly activity, particularly the public sphere. Instead, scholars are allowed to engage critically so long as those critiques do not disrupt the public sphere, a domain that includes the activities and choices of the academy itself.

⁸Action research is a participatory form of community-based research that intends to yield more direct change than traditional forms of research and scholarship. In this way, it is situated somewhere between critical theory and academic extension. It intends both to critique structures and find solutions to problematic community-based situations.

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