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ABSTRACT

The academy is one of the legitimate sites within our culture where values of citizenship and democracy can be encouraged through a critical pedagogy that seeks to transform oppressive social relations that are often naturalized by what Louis Althusser called ideological state apparatuses--the media, family, schools, churches and so on. Several different models of education are available to the educator today, the most widespread of which is the transmission model. This model trains students in "what to know" and "what to believe" and behind this model lies an agenda of reward and obedience and conformity. A critical cultural view of pedagogical practice, however, realizes the power that teachers and schools have to transform and redefine existing social relations. This view posits that students can improve their lives by the liberatory potential of dialogue. This pedagogy might be the most appropriate for the speech communication classroom. One engine that may be used in this approach would be popular culture, where sensitive cultural issues of race and racism can be discussed. Stereotyping by the mass media can be shown with film clips, such as scenes from the movie "Witness." bell hooks's notion of the "Cool Pose" may be used to stimulate thinking about the Afrocentric aesthetic and its contribution to American culture. Critical pedagogy is necessary for the academy because it lets students know that the school is in the real world. (Contains 14 references.) (TB)

Bringing in a Pedagogy **OF and For** Difference and Diversity in the Speech Communication Classroom

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The academy is one of the legitimate sites within our culture where values of citizenship and democracy can be encouraged through a critical pedagogy that seeks to transform oppressive social relations that are often naturalized by what Louis Althusser called ideological state apparatuses (ISA's)--the media, family, schools, churches and so on.

The rationality behind citizenship education and its relationship to critical democracy is based on the classical Greek cultural ideal of **arete** or the development of excellence in self and to society. The Greeks thought that self-improvement was achieved by participation (debate and speech), contest or competition (agonia), and training (askesis) of the soul. The cultural values of caring for the self in your obligation to become a "citizen of distinction" was thought by the Greeks to contribute to the growth and achievement of society. Michel Foucault (1986:76) is instructive on the classical Greek ideal of civic education:

> Generally speaking, anything that would contribute to the political education of a man as a citizen would also contribute to his training in virtue and conversely, the two endeavors went hand in hand. Moral askesis formed part of the paideia of the free man who had a role to play in the city and in dealings with others; it had no need of separate methods; gymnastics and endurance trials, music and the learning of vigorous and manly rhythms, practice in hunting and warfare, concern with one's demeanor in public, acquiring the aidos that would lead to self-respect through the respect one showed for others--all this was a means of educating the man who would be of service to his city, and it was also moral training for anyone who intended to master himself.

In modern educational discourse, competing ideologies exist concerning exactly how schools help to form the citizen. The dominant model of citizenship education, according to Henry Giroux

(1983, 1988), is one of **transmission and imposition** of knowledge. Schools in this model are training students in "what to know" and "what to believe," but not in "how to think." Modern education, unlike the classical Greek ideal of **eunomia** or schooling for participation by the citizen in a well-governed state, became "training grounds for character development, economic and social control" (Giroux, 1983: 322). The citizenship transmission model has at least two grave defects. It bores students, because it fails to include in the curriculum their own voices and lived experiences. "For too many students, schools are places of "dead time," that is, holding centers that have little or nothing to do with either their lives or their dreams" (Giroux, 1989: 150). Worse, this model shortchanges students, because it fails to include in their skills their ability to think independently for social benefit.

Behind the citizenship transmission model lies a hidden curriculum--to reward obedience and conformity. Stanley Aronowitz (1989) makes the compelling argument that schools are ideological apparatuses of control because they serve to reproduce established corporate norms of performance such as obedience, recognition of school hierarchy, etc. for the promise of a better life. Aronowitz claims that "the high school is the major site in which the real world of work is discovered. Students retain little or nothing of the content of knowledge (facts of history, how to perform algebraic equations) but remember how to succeed in receiving good grades, gaining admission to a decent college, and how to curry

favors with teachers, counselors, and employers" (1989: 205).

Paulo Freire uses the metaphor of banking to deconstruct the student-teacher relationship. In his view, this banking concept of education "turns [students] into containers, into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. The more completely he [sic] fills the receptacles, the better the teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (Freire, 1970: 57-58). Michel Foucault (1977) has pointed out how schools are very similar to prisons in how the space of classrooms are designed and how lectures are delivered to students without challenge or conflict. In a scathing critique of the rhetoric of William Bennett, Secretary of Education under the Reagan administration, Giroux and Simon state, "Under the banner of excellence, Bennett has promoted a nineteenth-century brand of elitism by appealing to a narrowly defined 'Western Tradition' conveyed through a pedagogy unencumbered by the messy concerns of equity, social justice, or the need to educate a critical citizenry" (1989: 236).

However, another approach to understanding the meaning of educational discourse argues that schools and teachers are key players in the struggle for democracy and social justice. A critical cultural view of pedagogical practice realizes the **power** that teachers and schools have to transform and redefine existing social relations. Since the late 1980's, "multicultural" understandings of educational ideologies have played an important role in making the classroom and the curriculum more inclusive of

subordinate groups. Educational consultants Raymond Wlodski and Marjery Ginsberg point out that multicultural education is making its impact felt, "in considering what kind of nation we want. If we want one in which all citizens can realize their potential, then we must create schools where the backgrounds and values of diverse students are acknowledged and where learning reflects the needs of such communities" (1993: 29). The rise of women's studies, african-american studies, and even the inclusion of gay and lesbian studies suggests that social movements have made their impact on the democratizing role of public education.

But what is appropriate pedagogy to achieve these important goals of difference and diversity in the speech communication classroom? How can educators best speak **of and for** non-traditional student voice(s) in the classroom and empower their subject-position and positioning by the dominant society?

Henry A. Giroux, Professor of Education and Cultural Studies at Pennsylvania State University, calls for studies that address new pedagogical strategies. He states, "Radical educators have theorized primarily **about** schools as agencies of domination, and as such, they have seldom concerned themselves with the possibility of constructing new, alternative approaches to school organization, curricula, and classroom social relations" (1989: 130). Hopefully, a progressive view of education can empower the teacher's role in that s/he can move from merely depositing information, to actually helping students improve their lives by the **liberatory potential of dialogue**.

Can the teacher-intellectual really achieve social transformation in the classroom? Giroux and Simon (1989: 248-249) offer an expanded and politicized concept of pedagogy--"any practice which intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning. . . This includes aspects of parenting, film making, theological work, social work, architecture, law, health work, advertising. These are all forms of cultural work." The pedagogical encounter has co-creative potentiality for **liberation** because its cultural work is never finished. Pedagogy always has the potential to transform not just self but also "the other" in the emancipatory rationality of citizenship education. Giroux and Simon (1989: 243-244) state the emancipatory possibilities of citizenship education in that: "teachers must develop forms of pedagogy informed by a substantive ethic that contests racism, sexism, and class exploitation as ideologies and social practices that disrupt and devalue public life."

Giroux in his essay on "Schooling as a Form of Cultural Politics" argues that educators may be vital to transform society. To signal this commitment, he employs the terms "transformative intellectual."

> This means that such educators are not merely concerned with forms of empowerment that promote individual achievement and traditional forms of academic success. Instead, they are concerned in their teaching with linking empowerment--the ability to think and act critically-to the concept of social engagement and transformation: that is, teaching for social transformation means educating students to take risks and to struggle within ongoing relations of power in order to be able to envision and promote those unrealized possibilities in the wider society that point to a more human future. Acting as a transformative intellectual means helping students acquire critical knowledge about basic societal

structures, such as the economy, the state, the workplace, so that such institutions can be open to potential transformation. (1989: 138-139)

I wish to argue for a second alternative approach to classroom pedagogy--one which involves using popular cultural forms, principally fictional, documentary, and musical performance/video films, to critique representations of race, gender, masculinity, sexual orientation, etc. As bell hooks (1990: 6) points out, "In teaching theory, I find that students may understand a particular paradigm in the abstract but are unable to see how to apply it to their lives. Focusing on popular culture has been one of the main ways to bridge this gap."

Teaching the Popular

In the academy and in the larger culture there are currently **cultural wars** taking place between various social formations that are grappling for power. In the academy this debate runs between critics who say that the the school should only teach "high culture" that is, what **they** define as the best that has been said, written, etc. Mostly centrist, these critics do not seek to disrupt the status quo or to question why other voices are silenced or asked to remain invisible. Theorists from the left tend to blur this out-dated Arnoldian distinction between high and low culture and adopt a postmodern playfulness with respect to the diversity of **tastes** of pleasure-using audiences characteristic of contemporary mass mediated culture. Popular culture has radical elements and tensions in its intellectual history because it does legitimate "populist" tastes and seeks to show the political importance of

opposition, resistance, and poaching strategies characteristic of popular art forms and cultures. Andrew Ross (1989: 5) states that the history of popular culture "must also be a history of intellectuals--in particular, those experts in culture whose traditional business is to define what is popular and what is legitimate, who patrol the ever shifting borders of popular and legitimate taste, who supervise the passports, the temporary visas and the cultural identities." Giroux and Simon (1989: 241) elaborate on this uneasy relation between education and the popular:

> The popular has been consistently seen by educators as potentially disruptive of existing circuits of power. It has been seen as both threat and profane desire, that is, as both subversive in its capacity to reconstruct the investments of meaning and desire, and dangerous in its potential to provide a glimpse of social practices and popular forms that affirm both difference and different ways of life.

An arch-conservative critic like Allan Bloom in his best selling book, The Closing of the American Mind (1987), argues unconvincingly that rock music and walkmen are leading our nation's youth to an obsession with sex and masturbation. This demonizing of a contemporary and historically African-American generated musical form (from gospel and blues), reveals that Bloom's imagination utterly lacks cultural insight and sensibility. Bloom's diatribe, really against popular culture, does not succeed because he fails to understand how rock and roll is used by youth audiences for expressing desire. One of my non-traditional students did an excellent critical analysis of rock as one of the only legitimate forms within our culture for expressing sexuality

and desire. He was surprised at first, that he could examine something so familiar and personal to him as rock and roll. Not only did his work show personal involvement with the subject matter. In addition, his reading of rock and roll was from an "indigenous" perspective of understanding the subjective meanings and bricolage of signs in rock culture.

Incorporating popular culture is a useful pedagogical strategy for teaching students to perceive differences between subordinate groups (women, people of color, and gays and lesbians) and how the dominant culture marginalizes those groups. I have found that using clips from popular films works well to discuss sensitive cultural issues of race and racism, gender resocialization, and sexual choice. Many of the students have already seen films such as Witness, The Color Purple, Torch Song Trilogy, Driving Miss Daisy, Do The Right Thing, Tribute to James Brown, (a documentary about his influence on modern music), images of women in danger from thrasher films, etc. This form of media activism or ideological criticism teaches the naive viewer to be critical of forms of representation; it shows how mainstream media constructs images to reinforce structural features of domination such as typifications by race, gender and sexual orientation. (In a moment we will see two negative typifications of black males in film). In addition, we can show how a suculture's aesthetic influences American culture, as in the case of how the **Cool Pose** of the African American male embodies the "Afrocentric aesthetic." Because marginalized groups are often embarrased about their own

representations in the media--criminal black males, hispanic bandits, gay queens--students of such marginalized groups often need help in decoding their own deleterious images. The Cool Pose is what bell hooks (1990:180) reads as a form of self-expression black men use to suppress and mask feelings. I have used hook's interpretation of the Cool Pose to discuss sexist ways of relating between men and women in Spike Lee's film Do The Right Thing. The notion also is instructive for teaching about subcultural styles and racism in a non-threatening manner.

> Cool Pose, manifested by the expressive lifestyle, is also an aggressive assertion of masculinity. It emphatically says, "White man this is my turf, you can't match me here." Though he may be impotent in the political and corporate world, the black man demonstrates his potency in athletic competition, entertainment and the pulpit with a verve that borders on the spectacular. Through the virtuousity of a performance, he tips the scales in his favor. "See me, touch me, hear me, but, white man you can't copy me." This is the subliminal message which black males signify in their oftentimes flamboyant performances. Cool Pose, then, becomes the cultural signature for such black men. (hooks, 1990: 180)

(show MC Hammer clip here)

I have effectively used hook's notion of the Cool Pose to stimulate students thinking about the Afrocentric aesthetic contribution on American culture. When I ask them to name some influential African-American musicians or sports figures, they easily bring to mind MC Hammer and Michael Jordan, etc. However, when I ask them to provide names of black intellectuals, corporate leaders, and politicians, they can not name them as easily. And this failure here to offer names vividly teaches them the concept of the Cool Pose and thus, the invisibility of the African American presence in mainstream culture.

Another pedagogical strategy is using film clips to discuss the problem of racial stereotyping by the mass media. Students seem very receptive to critiquing mass media representations because it is a cultural form that they are used to seeing in their everyday lives. Using fictional narratives such as film clips can be effectively used to stimulate awareness and discussion of the problem of racism in a less controversial manner. In other words, using these kinds of popular media artifacts (many of which students have already seen), can help the communication educator to teach often highly politically charged concepts such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.

(Show film clip from Witness here)

The scene I have chosen from Witness (1985) is a good example of a concept that I use in class to discuss racial and sexual stereotyping that the British film scholar Richard Dyer (1983) refers to as "typification." This mechanism works to suture in the stereotype through iconography (action, nonverbal indices, dress, language, plot, etc.), that is, to place a character quickly and economically. Bimbo Blonde characters, gay queens, and black males as "criminal" such as in Danny Glover's juxtapositioning with the lily white, innocent Amish boy in Witness are examples of how film typifications operate. Richard Dyer (1984: 29) makes a useful distinction between **social types** and **stereotypes**:

> Types are instances which indicate those who live by the rules of society (social types) and those whom the rules are designed to exclude (stereotypes). For this reason, stereotypes are also more rigid than social types. The latter are open-ended, more provisional, more flexible to create the sense of freedom, choice, self-definition for those within the boundaries of normalcy. These

boundaries themselves, however, must be clearly delineated, and so stereotypes, one of the mechanisms of boundary maintenance, are characteristically fixed, clear-cut, unalterable. You appear to choose your social type in some measure, whereas you are condemned to a stereotype. Moreover, the dramatic, ridiculous or horrific quality of stereotypes serves to show how important it is to live by the rules.

bell hooks (1990: 63) makes the point that "if we are to live in a less violent and more just society, then we must engage in anti-sexist and anti-racist work. We desperately need to explore and understand the connections between racism and sexism. And we need to teach everyone about those connections so they can be critically aware and socially active." In summary, I have found the use of popular media artifacts such as film clips and performance videos to be one effective method for engaging in the kind of critical work that hooks describes.

Resistance and Strategy for Teaching Critical Pedagogy

The kinds of resistance I might get are the standard line "I'm not prejudiced," yet the person has had virtually null contact with another culture besides their own. Once we get the student to start questioning the forms of racism and how they are parasites that feed into the other Isms--classism, ageism, elitism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.--then we can start talking about the problem. Because many of my older women students know exactly what sexism is, they can share narratives in class about their own oppression. An attitude of defensiveness or blaming others for the problem is the worst kind of strategy for anti-sexist and anti-racist work. Giroux and Simon state that "critical pedagogy refuses detachment, though it does not silence in the name of its own ideological

fervor or correctness" (1989: 244). I have taught primarily older, working-class women students who are far from naive about the problem because many of their lives' problems result from domestic abuse and other mistreatment. Hence, they are often far better educators than I could ever be on the problem.

Students must be made to feel comfortable, not defensive, in discussing controversial subject matter and feel that they too may be able to influence others in the class. When I teach about the forms of racism such as 1) aware/blatant racism, 2) aware/covert racism, 3) unaware/unintentional racism, and 4) unaware self-righteous racism, I tell stories where I have seen how subtly these oppressive forms of language are expressed in a joke, with a landlord, in a story told about a colleague, etc. It is important to get the student to bring their own life stories of hearing and seeing oppressive talk to the class. One of the most effective exercises I ever used, was having students bring in narratives they have heard from everyday life that were overtly or covertly racist. (Of course, this exercise should be done only after a sense of groupness to the class has emerged.) It was one of the most moving classroom experiences we had all semester. Because everyone had various stories to tell, everyone became an educator on the problem.

The biggest obstacle I have faced however is not student resistance but rather administrative unawareness. Administrators well know that discussion of controversial material can cause complaints; what many do not realize, however, is that such

discussion can enhance education.

This is plainly why critical cultural studies has so much value. It brings in popular materials (films, television, controversial political subjects, etc.). In most traditional classrooms, the teacher stands up and tells the students "what is true" and "what to believe." This indeed achieves both training and indoctrination, but grievously shortchanges true education, at the center of which lies "how to think."

I have tried to make a case that a critical pedagogy is necessary for the academy because it lets students know that the school is in the real world and is a part of the real world. The purpose of critical pedagogy is to democratize education by making students aware of the reality of many points of view in a diversified society. The method for achieving that pedagogy always strives to incorporate student experience as "official" curriculum content. As they become increasingly like corporations, schools are teaching students not how to think, but how to conform and follow rules. What conservative school administrations often do not realize is that critical and oppositional teaching encourages values for cultural pluralism necessary to contribute to that workforce. The rise of lawsuits in organizations over sexual harrassment, racial, and sexual discrimination suggest our society is no longer tolerating these forms of unfair treatment. I will argue that without cultural education, particularly about issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation, most people will continue to reproduce the outdated conventions of oppression that victimize the

Other. A critical cultural pedagogy is thus a vital subject matter for the agenda of educators simply because we are in the business of producing good citizens and helping to ensure a democratic and just society for all.

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