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Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy: Social Justice Reconsidered

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> *Colonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a pro-gram of complete disorder. But it cannot come about as a result of magical prac-tices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: That is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible, nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.* (Fanon 1963:36)
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> *I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with even greater clarity that my prac-tice demands of me a definition of where I stand. A break with what is not right ethically. I must choose between one thing and another thing. I cannot be a teacher and be in favor of everyone and everything. I cannot be in favor merely of people, humanity, vague phrases far from the concrete nature of educative prac-tice. Mass hunger and unemployment, side by side with opulence, are not the result of destiny.* (Freire 1998:93)

In the contemporary contexts of what many refer to as the United States, working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples are often reduced to ontological foreigners in the very space and time they occupy. In these contexts, people are assaulted by multiple and mutually constitutive forms of violence in the various dimensions—the economic, the cultural, the political, the linguistic, the sexual, the spatial, the psychological, and epistemological—of their daily lives. Defining violence as "any relation, process, or condition by which an individual or group violates the physical, social, and/or psychological integrity of another person or group," Bulhan (1981:53) explains that violence inhibits human growth, negates inherent potential, limits productive living, and causes death. We contend that one cannot ignore this violence when calling for social justice, and that it is necessary to define explicitly one's particular understanding of the term—in other words, the meaning of social justice that grounds one's politics and projects. Meanings are never neutral; they are always situated socially, culturally, and historically, and they operate within the logic of differing

ideologies that imply differing sets of social practices. These practices, in turn, serve and sustain particular sets of interests, while they simultaneously work against others. Hence, we argue that any notion of social justice should be interrogated with the following questions: What ideologies underlie particular notions of social justice? Who benefits from the instantiation of those notions? At whose expense are those notions instantiated?

We argue for a notion of social justice that recognizes that the contemporary United States is essentially characterized by an internal neocolonialism (Almaguer 1974; Barrera 1979; Blauner 1972) that has its origins in the mutually reinforcing systems of colonial and capitalist domination and exploitation that enslaved Africans and dispossessed indigenous populations throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. We insist on a notion of social justice that acknowledges that the forms of violence and "microaggressions" (Davis 1995) experienced by dominated and exploited groups in the context of everyday life are both normalized and officially sanctioned by dominant ideologies and institutional arrangements in American society. Most importantly, we argue for a notion of social justice that sees dismantling our internal neocolonial condition and abolishing its multiple forms of violence as preconditions to the existence of justice between all peoples inhabiting the contemporary United States.

Working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples' interests cannot be represented by amnesia-ridden notions of social justice that ignore the current manifestations and effects of the corporal and cultural genocide that has been taking place in American society throughout the past four centuries. At worst, many of these notions are calls for social reform that ignore the racial and cultural dimensions of the social injustice we inherit from our colonial and capitalist past; at worst, they are calls for a more socially equitable (i.e., racially and ethnically diverse) participation in the existing structures of domination and exploitation. For us, the struggle for social justice is inextricably tied to the struggle for a politics and praxis of anticapitalist decolonization in the mutually constitutive terrains of social existence—in the economic, the cultural, the political, the juridical, and the educational. Focusing specifically on the educational terrain, we argue for engaging in the struggle for social justice through a decolonizing pedagogical praxis.

In this chapter, we outline an emergent theory of pedagogy—a decolonizing pedagogy—that stands in stark contrast to most social justice pedagogies currently in vogue. More specifically, we propose the concept of a decolonizing pedagogy to address the issue of social justice from and within the educational arena. We argue that an anticapitalist decolonizing pedagogical praxis is a concrete way to struggle for a social justice that serves the interests of working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples in the internal neocolonial contexts of the contemporary United States. In what follows, we define our developing conception of a decolonizing pedagogy by providing a provisional definition of the term and outlining its constituent elements. This is followed by a discussion

of some fundamental premises of our call for a decolonizing pedagogy and an outline of conceptual frameworks that currently inform its conceptualization. We conclude with a discussion of decolonizing pedagogical praxis that outlines its curricular contents and explicates its grounding in cultural-historical conceptions of learning and development.

WHY SOCIAL JUSTICE FROM A DECOLONIZING PERSPECTIVE?

In California's recent past, voter propositions designed to eliminate health and educational services to "undocumented, immigrant" populations (Proposition 187), to roll-back the limited civil rights gains of the 1960s (Proposition 209), and to prohibit the use of the home language in teaching and learning (Proposition 227) have been the order of the day. To some people, these propositions are mere vestiges of a racial discrimination and a social inequality that persist despite a long and concerted effort to uphold the founding ideals (e.g., liberty, democratic participation, and equality) of the American nation. To us, these policies are refurbished historical practices that produce racial and class domination and reiterate century-old questions: What are the value and place of nonwhite peoples in an Anglo-European nation and society? What should be the role of education for poor, indigenous, and nonwhite children?

These recent policies are manifestations of contemporary struggles and conflicting interests between differing groups in a neocolonial context that has been imposed, maintained, and dominated by Anglo-Europeans since the seventeenth century. They are manifestations of power, domination, conflict, and struggle that can be traced to European conquest, colonization, and imperialist expansion throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

While we acknowledge that the past is obviously not the present, we argue that the present can neither exist nor be understood outside of the past. It is impossible for social subjects to be ontologically disconnected; their being in the world cannot be detached from and unaffected by the time and space they have already occupied. In our recent past, social subjects, social relations, and forms of social organization have been so fundamentally marked by colonialism and capitalism that we believe it is naïve, erroneous, and even deceitful to contemplate our present existence without an analysis and understanding of the unfolding enconcretizations and effects of these. We are not, of course, arguing that we are living the actual colonialism or capitalist colonialism of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and/or nineteenth century. Clearly, many of the processes and practices of that colonial and capitalist domination and exploitation have evolved, have been altered, have been abandoned, or have been legally terminated. But it is also clear that essential features of that domination and exploitation continue to structure the social relations among differing groups in American society. We insist on discussing contemporary notions and issues of social justice from a decolonizing perspective because we understand that for

working class indigenous and nonwhite peoples and their descendants the materialization of social justice, on the one hand, and the discrediting and dismantling of the lasting effects and contemporary manifestations of our capitalist colonialism, on the other hand, are inseparable.

FUNDAMENTAL PREMISES OF A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGY

A basic premise of our call for a decolonizing pedagogy is that the dominant economic, cultural, political, judicial, and educational arrangements in contemporary American society are those of an internal neocolonialism produced by the mutually reinforcing systems of colonial and capitalist domination and exploitation that have organized social relations throughout the history of what today constitutes the United States. Given the underlying significance of this premise, we elaborate on the concept of internal neocolonialism.

The concept of internal neocolonialism we employ to characterize the dominant condition of social existence in the United States is indebted to the work of Barrera (1979) and Almaguer (1974). Barrera employs the concept in the development of a theory of racial inequality that is proposed as an alternative to the theories of deficiency, theories of bias, and theories of structural discrimination that attempted to explicate the issue of the Chicana/o inequality in the United States. In outlining this theory, he offers a discussion of colonialism and internal colonialism that is essential to the notion of internal neocolonialism we propose. Colonialism is defined by Barrera as follows:

> Colonialism is a structured relationship of domination and subordination, where the dominant and subordinate groups are defined along ethnic and/or racial lines, and where the relationship is established and maintained to serve the interests of all or part of the dominant group (193).

Internal colonialism is distinguished from colonialism in the following terms:

> Internal colonialism is a form of colonialism in which the dominant and subordinate populations are intermingled, so that there is no geographically distinct, "metropolis" separate from the "colony." (194)

Almaguer (1974) links internal colonialism in the United States to advanced monopoly capitalism in a manner that is also essential to our developing concept of internal neocolonialism. In his examination of Chicana/o oppression in North America, Almaguer calls for a simultaneous analysis of capitalist and colonial structures, arguing that both the historical process of colonization (be it classical colonialism, neocolonialism, or internal colonialism) and the rise and spread of capitalism should be viewed as fundamental in the organization of social and economic power in the United States. He explains that the histories of oppressed

peoples have been largely formed both by the rise of capitalism and the expansion of colonial domination, and he further theorizes that there is a dialectical relationship in the development of monopoly capitalism and the development of internal colonialism. He describes this relationship as follows:

> …the colonial expansionism by which the U.S. absorbed vast territories paved the way for the incorporation of its non-white colonial labor force. This contributed in turn to the accelerated process of capital accumulation. Necessary for the development of modern capitalism…not only did internal colonialism and monopoly capitalism develop concurrently, but…both processes are intimately interrelated and feed each other. At the same time that the utilization of non-whites as a controlled, colonized labor force contributed to the development of the U.S. as a major metropolis of the international capitalist system, the attendant class system in the U.S. provided a means of reinforcing a racially and culturally defined social hierarchy…(42)

As this passage indicates, capitalism did not simply develop side by side with internal colonial domination; it became inextricably interrelated with it. More significantly, Almaguer contends that capitalism is now the dominant mode of production and that it continues to systematically perpetuate a colonial domination in which the brunt of its oppression and class contradictions "have been largely carried over on racial terms and fall on the backs of colonized people of color" (1974:42).

We define the dominant condition characterizing social existence in what today constitutes the United States as a colonial one because there continues to be a structured relationship of cultural, political, and economic domination and subordination between European whites on the one hand, and indigenous and nonwhite peoples on the other. What's more, this relationship (which was imposed and institutionalized throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and has been maintained, in essence, up to the present) continues to serve primarily the interests of the dominant white, English-speaking, and Christian population. We qualify it as an internal colonial condition because the colonizing/dominant and colonized/subordinate populations coexist, are often socially integrated, and even share citizenship within the same national borders. What's more, we see this internal colonial condition, its forms of social organization, and its institutional apparatuses as inextricably tied to and perpetuated by capitalism and capitalist social relations—a capitalism that Almaguer discussed as advanced monopoly capitalism and we currently see as global capitalism (Stromquist and Monkman 2000; McLaren and Farahmandpur 2000). Our conception of internal colonialism, then, assumes the fundamentality of capitalism and capitalist social relations in the various dimensions of our neocolonial condition and social interaction.

We propose expanding the concept from internal colonialism to internal neocolonialism because we think it is necessary to distinguish between the forms of domination, oppression, and exploitation of the internal colonialism of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and the forms of domination, oppression, and exploitation that have characterized the internal colonialism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Landmark legislation and its effects (e.g., the Emancipation Proclamation, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Indian Citizenship Act, Brown vs. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, and the Native American Languages Act) have altered the nature of the domination, oppression, and exploitation of subordinated groups. We think it is fundamentally important to acknowledge and account for significant changes in the condition that has characterized social existence in the United States. The past is obviously not the present, nor is the condition of the nineteenth century the same as the condition of the twenty-first century. We contend, however, that the condition characterizing the present maintains essential features of the condition that characterized social the past.

It is important to point out that our argument about the continuity of colonial relations is not grounded in simplistic representations of colonizing and the colonized populations. We are cognizant that the population of settling and invading Europeans was defined by difference and division along ethnic, linguistic, gender, and social class lines—not even the dominant population of Anglos was socially homogenous. Similarly, we are aware that there was tremendous diversity among both the indigenous population and African slaves. We are conscious that in referring to indigenous people, African slaves, and their descendants, we reference people from a plurality of groups with differing cultures, languages, and forms of social organization. Similarly, our conception of the processes and practices (both past and present) of colonialism acknowledges that not all European groups (nor differing social groups within the dominant Anglo population) have been equally complicit in the colonial relations of domination and exploitation that have taken place. Not all European groups have benefited equally from the establishment and perpetuation of the colonial/neocolonial condition. Our conception of internal colonialism in the United States (both past and present) also acknowledges that not all indigenous or nonwhite peoples and their descendants experienced or are experiencing colonialism in a uniform manner.

Another fundamental premise of our call for a decolonizing pedagogy is that the internal neocolonial condition of our social existence (i.e., our reality) can be transformed through *praxis*—guided action aimed at transforming individuals and their world that is reflected upon and leads to further action. This understanding of the malleability of social reality and the transformative potential of human praxis has its origins in the materialist philosophy of Marx and Engels and is clearly articulated in Freire's pedagogy for the oppressed.

Marx and Engels posit that human existence and society are produced by people and can be transformed by people. In a letter to one of his contemporaries, Marx asks, "what is society, whatever its form may be?" He then answers that society is "the product of men's[/women's] reciprocal activity!" (1973:3). For Marx and Engels (1984) the activity of men and women in the world is the fundamental basis of human existence because it is at the center of the production of material life itself; it produces society and is the driving force of history. Their critique of the German idealism of their day clearly articulates the essential importance of human activity to the social existence and historical being of men and women in the world:

> Since we are dealing with the Germans who are devoid of premises, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history, the premise, namely, that men[/women] must be in a position to live in order to "make history." But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing, and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today as a thousand years ago must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life. Even when the sensuous world is reduced to a minimum, to as stick as with Saint Bruno [Bauer] it presupposes the action of producing the stick. (48)

Marx and Engels argue that history *is made* by men and women who have secured the ability to live, but they do not argue that even having insured this ability these men and women can go about making history as they choose. In *El Dieciocho Brumario de Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* Marx points out that "men [/women] make their own history," but that they "are not free to make it as they please, under circumstances chosen by themselves." Those circumstances "are directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past" (1978:9; our translation from Spanish). Marx and Engels do not see men and women making history free from the social condition inherited from their past, but neither do they see that social condition absolutely determining the history they can make. While the past weighs heavily upon the present, it does not preclude men and women from radically altering the social existence imposed by their past. Marx and Engels explicitly posit this in their third thesis on Feuerbach:

> The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men[/women] and that it is essential to educate the educator himself [/herself].
>
> The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice.* (1984:121)

Through this materialist philosophy and social theorization, we understand that the condition of our social existence in American society is a product of our most fundamental activity as living beings. We live an internal neocolonialism because we engage in colonial relations of domination and exploitation in the production and reproduction of our material existence and its cultural expression. We make the history of our internal colonial domination through the practice of our everyday lives. Our domination and exploitation do not reside exclusively in an ideological and discursive legacy; nor are these to be found only at the centers of power in American society. They reside and can be found in the labor and mundane displacements of our bodies. Our colonial domination and oppression materialize in the here and now of the processes and practices of our everyday lives—especially those related to securing the basic necessities of life. We also understand that we do not simply choose to engage in processes and practices that make and remake the internal colonialism we experience. We labor and relate to others in the production and repro-duction of our social existence with the weight of a colonial and imperialist past squarely on our backs. It is within the circumstances inherited from that past that we reproduce the condition of our social existence and make our history. We are not, however, condemned to continue making and remaking the condition of our existence according to the circumstances imposed by our past. Those circumstances can be changed instead of merely reproduced and made anew. We understand that the very practice that makes possible our existence and characterizes its condition also holds the potential to radically transform these circumstances.

Mere practice, however, will not lead to a social transformation that effectively alters the internal neocolonialism we experience. It needs to be practice that is grounded in a critical consciousness of this condition and its possible transformation. This understanding finds clear expression in Freire's (1990) pedagogy for the oppressed and his call for a praxis of liberation. His pedagogical conception begins with the materialist theorization that social existence is the product of human action and can be transformed by human praxis:

> Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of action, so it is not transformed by chance. If men[/women] produce social reality (which in the "inversion of praxis" turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for men[/women].
>
> Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men [/women] as oppressors and oppressed. The latter, whose task it is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle. One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's[/women's] 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. (36)

In this passage we see the fundamental importance that Freire places on the development of a critical consciousness of social existence. An end to oppression, which is the fundamental objective of Freire's call for a socially transformative praxis, requires that men and women have the ability to perceive their existence in the world. He argues that their action in the world is largely determined by the way they see themselves within it, and that a correct perception necessitates of an ongoing reflection on their world. For Freire it is neither the mere action nor the mere reflection and critical consciousness of men and women that will transform the world and end oppression. This can only be achieved through "praxis: the action and reflection of men in the world in order to transform it" (66).

The ability to perceive correctly and arrive at a critical consciousness of the world, however, does not come automatically; it is itself the product of praxis. From this position Freire argues for an educational practice (a pedagogical praxis) that engages with the oppressed in reflection that leads to action on their concrete reality. He calls for a pedagogy that makes oppression and its causes objects of a reflection that will allow the oppressed to develop a consciousness of "their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation" (33). Freire clearly articulates the essential importance of critical consciousness to transformative action that is liberating:

> In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. (34)

He attributes to education an essential role in the development of developing critical consciousness that Freire ascribes to education:

> In problem posing education, men[/women] develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves. They come to see the world not as static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of men with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all) it is also true that the form of action men adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceived themselves in the world. Hence the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world

> without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action. (71)

From Freire we understand that a social transformation that works in the interests of working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples necessitates a critical consciousness of social existence and the possibility of its transformation. We argue that a critical decolonizing consciousness is fundamental to the transformation of the internal neocolonial condition of social existence in the contemporary United States. One need only consider the level of post—September 11 patriotism and expressed belief in official rhetoric (about America's moral righteousness and freedom loving and defending tradition) among working-class indigenous and nonwhite people to see the degree to which our internal neocolonial condition has "submerged" the consciousness of men and women who live and experience the effects of that condition on a daily basis. The vast majority of working-class indigenous and nonwhite people in the contemporary United States cannot see the extent to which the essence of the colonialism that made them English-speaking, Christian individuals continues to define their social existence. We agree with Freire that how men and women act in the world is largely related to how they perceive themselves in the world, and thus we understand that the existent potential to transform our internal neocolonial condition will remain unrealized if we fail to appropriately perceive and develop a critical consciousness of this condition and its possible undoing. A social transformation that ends our neocolonial oppression and exploitation in American society will require a cycle of emancipatory thought, action, and reflection—in other words, a praxiological cycle. We build on Freire and contend that critical consciousness is developed through the struggle against internal neocolonialism both in the classroom and the larger social context.

TOWARD THE DEFINITION OF A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy has put forth the notion that classroom practice integrates particular curriculum content and design, instructional strategies and techniques, and forms of evaluation. It argues that these specify a particular version about what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct a representation of our world and our place within it (McLaren 1998). From this perspective, the pedagogical is inherently political. For us a decolonizing pedagogy encompasses both an anticolonial and decolonizing notion of pedagogy and an anticolonial and decolonizing pedagogical praxis. It is an anticolonial and decolonizing theory and praxis that insists that colonial domination and its ideological frameworks operate and are reproduced in and through the curricular content and design, the instructional practices, the social organization of learning, and the forms of evaluation that inexorably sort and label students into enduring categories of success and failure

of schooling. Thus, an anticolonial and decolonizing pedagogical praxis explicitly works to transform these dimensions of schooling so that schools become sites for the development of a critical decolonizing consciousness and activity that work to ameliorate and ultimately end the mutually constitutive forms of violence that characterize our internal neocolonial condition. For us, a decolonizing pedagogy addresses both the means and the ends of schooling.

THE CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATIONS OF A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGY

The decolonizing pedagogy we propose must be guided by a conceptually dynamic worldview and a set of values that make it anticapitalist, antiracist, antisexist, and antihomophobic. It is informed by a theoretical heteroglossia that strategically utilizes theorizations and understandings from various fields and conceptual frameworks to unmask the logics, workings, and effects of internal colonial domination, oppression, and exploitation in our contemporary contexts. Among the most significant of these are postcolonial studies, spatial theory, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and cultural-historical activity theory of learning and human development. In what follows, we briefly discuss the first four of these. The manner in which cultural historical theories of learning inform our conception of a decolonizing pedagogy is explained in our discussion of decolonizing pedagogical praxis.

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

While postcolonial studies is an increasingly divided and contested area of scholarship, elements of its critical focus on European colonialism's enduring effects contribute to our conception of a decolonizing pedagogy. In the past two decades, postcolonial theory has gained a significant ascendancy and legitimacy in the Western (i.e., British and American) academy. One can readily see its increasing significance in the expanding bibliography that theorizes, studies, critiques, or otherwise engages the reality and/or conceptual framework referred to as "postcolonial" (Afzal-Khan and Seshadri-Crooks 2000; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tifflin 1995; Gandhi 1998; Mongia 1996; Moore-Gilbert 1997; Singh and Schmidt 2000). This same bibliography, however, also reveals that there are differing conceptions of what constitutes a "postcolonial reality" or the "postcolonial theory" that explains it. Referring to the theoretical and methodological heterogeneity that characterizes the body of thought and work produced under its rubric, Gandhi (1998) explains why postcolonial is a "defuse and nebulous term":

> Over the last decade postcolonial studies has emerged both as a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories. While it has enabled a complex interdisciplinary dialogue with the humanities, its

> uneasy incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories—such as Marxism and poststructuralism—confounds any uniformity of approach. As a consequence, there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies. Disagreements arising from usage and methodology are reflected in the semantic quibbling which haunts attempts to name postcolonial terminology. (viii)

Afzal-Kahn and Seshadri-Crooks explain why, despite its unquestionable growth, the field remains both undefinable and amorphous:

> It does not have a theory to speak of, concerned at it is with local cultural practices and political issues in the context of transnationalism. Unlike other area studies, postcolonial studies has no identifiable subject; it would be impossible to suggest that it pertains to one or the other area of the world or that it is confined to a genre, period, or theme; nor can it name a stable First or Third world subject as its legitimate speaker "(as can, e.g., women's studies, African American Studies, or gay and lesbian studies)." (2000:19)

Moore-Gilbert writes that there even appears to be "a growing divide between postcolonial theory on the one hand and the rest of postcolonial criticism on the other" (1997:1). Characteristic of this apparent divide are fervent disagreements over theory and method, as well as attacks on the politics and personal commitments of particular scholars (see AfzalKhan and Seshadri-Crooks 2000; Gandhi 1998; Mongia 1996; MooreGilbert 1997). There are disagreements, for example, between those working from a poststructuralist perspective and those working from a Marxist perspective—the former privileging discourse; the latter political economy (Afzal-Khan and Seshadri-Crooks 2000; Gandhi 1998; Mongia 1996; Moore-Gilbert, 1997).

Without intending to minimize the significance of the conceptual and political issues related to the heterogeneity and antagonism in the field, we steer clear of these (at least for now) and highlight that which informs both our call for and our conception of a decolonizing pedagogy. It is, obviously, beyond the limitations of this chapter to engage in a thorough dis cussion of the varied ways in which postcolonial studies can inform us, but we want to signal at least two of these.

The first is the field's concern with recalling a colonial past and addressing its persisting effects. Gandhi argues that if postcoloniality can be said to be concerned with the "consequences of a self-willed historical amnesia," the theoretical value of postcolonial theory resides in its "ability to elaborate forgotten memories of this condition" (1998:7–8). The capacity to recall and articulate forgotten memories of an internal colonial past is essential to the notion and praxis of a decolonizing pedagogy. Consider the following: how easily the average American can recall the heroic deeds of the Founding Fathers, while forgetting their ignoble practices and activities as slave-owning aristocrats

(Franklin and Moss 1988); how most Americans know that the Founding Fathers and their contemporaries erected a democracy on the principles of liberty, justice, and the equality of all men, while ignoring that what they actually institutionalized and practiced was a democracy that excluded women, the nonpropertied, and all nonwhites (Zinn 1995); how American collective memory nostalgically remembers a Wild West that was tamed by pioneers in covered wagons and courageous cowboys on white horses, while it easily forgets about the presence of indigenous peoples on the continent, the Indian Wars, and the federal government's systematic removal and extermination of these Indians (Brown 1981; Churchill 1997).

Also consider how U.S. citizens see contemporary Mexicanos and Salvadoreños who cross U.S. borders as illegals, while they are blinded to American imperialists who conquered territories and imposed those borders in the first place (Acuña 1981; Powell 2000); how contemporary Americans remember the military attack on Pearl Harbor as "a day of infamy," while forgetting that the U.S. naval fleet was an occupying army in Hawaii (Zinn 1995); how in the recent past Americans condemned white rule and apartheid in South Africa, while maintaining a complicit naiveté and silence about white supremacist rule (Almaguer 1994; Horseman 1997) and Indian reservations in the United States (Deloria 1983); how present-day Americans are abhorred at terrorist attacks against America, while they find security in, or altogether ignore, the practices and activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in foreign countries (Chomsky and Herman 1979).

That dominant American society fails to recall a colonial past and acknowledge its persisting effects explains why teachers in today's schools ingenuously lead choruses of school children to sing about a beautiful America from sea to shining sea; why students study U.S. history in high school yet graduate understanding none of the above; why Americans who studied U.S. history in high school place U.S. flags on car antennas to demonstrate that they stand united behind freedom and democracy, while they fail to consider all of the above. A decolonizing pedagogy challenges ahistorical memories of America's colonial past.

Secondly, we agree with the field's assertion that there is a direct and material relation between the political processes and social structures of colonialism on the one hand, and Western regimes of knowledge and representation on the other (Moore-Gilbert 1997). While postcolonial studies have addressed this relation primarily in terms of Western imperialist nations (e.g., England, France, and the United States) and their colonial territories outside the nation-state, this relation has also been essential to the domestic imperialism and internal colonialism of the United States. The brutal subordination, domination, and/or exploitation of indigenous and nonwhite peoples that were openly practiced and institutionally sanctioned in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries were always accompanied and sustained (e.g., rationalized, legitimized, excused, and/or made commonsensical) by specific systems of knowledge and particular representations of peoples, their essence, their cultures, and their value as beings

(Almaguer 1994: De Leon 1983; Dyer 1997; Fredrickson 1995; Seed 2001; Spring 2001b; Williams 1995).

Western epistemology and systems of knowledge have been integral to the internal colonial domination suffered by indigenous and nonwhite peoples. There were culturally specific systems of knowledge and underlying logics directly and materially related to the enslavement of Africans (Campbell and Oakes 1995; Trouillot 1995), the dispossession of Indigenous populations from the land (Seed 2001; Williams 1995) and the westward imperialist expansion of the United States (Almaguer 1994; Horseman 1997). Seed writes that Europeans who began seizing the resources of peoples in the New World after 1492 described the reasons for their seizure in terms of "fundamental international maxims" (2001: 4). The case was, however, that "what they characterized as 'international' or 'universal were simply their own distinct European cultural traditions applied overseas" (4). Trouillot writes that by the early 1700s "the ideological rationalization of Afro-American slavery in the early 1700's relied increasingly on explicit formulations of the ontological order inherited from the Renaissance" (1995:77). Colonization, he explains, provided a powerful "impetus for the transformation of European ethnocentrism into scientific racism" (77). Deloria asserts that the science founded on the Cartesian bifurcation of mind and matter "enabled atrocities of unimagined proportions to be administered" against darker-skinned people by slave owners and armies (1997:6). He calls to mind a few examples of the type of hideous scientific practices (e.g., the experimentation with Indian cadavers, the testing of experimental drugs, and sterilization) exercised against indigenous peoples and he gives the following description of Western science's role in their continued domination and oppression:

> These practical examples of science gone mad are but minor points in the long run. More important for our purposes, while not forgetting the horrors of some scientific behavior, is the impact of scientific doctrine on the status of Indians in American society. Regardless of what Indians have said concerning their origins, their migrations, their experiences with birds, animals, lands, waters, mountains, and other peoples, the scientists have maintained a stranglehold on the definitions of what respectable and reliable human experiences are. The Indian explanation is always cast aside as a superstition, precluding Indians from having an acceptable status as human beings, and reducing them in the eyes of educated people to a prehuman level of ignorance. Indians must simply take whatever status they have been granted by scientists at that point which they have become acceptable to science. (7)

Representation of the other was an essential dimension of the relation between Western systems of knowledge and the political processes and social structures of colonialism in the United States. *Race* and *culture* were fundamental sites where British representations constructed an inferior Other that was integral to

(although not necessarily the ultimate cause of) the colonial domination and the imperialist expansion that privileged white Europeans (primarily Englishmen) at the expense of indigenous and nonwhite peoples (Almaguer 1994; Campbell and Oakes 1995; De Leon 1983; Seed 2001; Spring 2001a; Williams 1995). As early as the sixteenth century, for example, the English had begun to represent Africans as "heathens" and "savages" devoid of civilization, as well as lewd, libidinous, and "almost bestial" (Campbell and Oakes 1997). By the early 1800s, these types of representations had been increasingly racialized and essentialized as constitutive of the racial character and inferiority of black slaves. The role of the notion of racial inferiority in rationalizing the institution of slavery is well documented and widely known. Less known is how fundamentally important the institution of slavery was to the economic development of the early United States and its westward imperialist expansion (Franklin and Moss 1988)—an economic development and an imperialist expansion that fundamentally benefited European whites at the expense of indigenous and nonwhite peoples.

The racial and cultural representation of indigenous peoples was no less ruthless. Almaguer (1994) explains that the European colonists who battled native peoples for control of the land in North America brought well-developed assumptions that allowed them to differentiate themselves from those they encountered. Those assumptions—Eurocentric binaries that differentiated between Christians and heathens, and civilized and savage—are said to have provided the cultural standard by which the colonists initially racialized the native population. They were later used to differentiate the cultural groups encountered by European Americans as they expanded into the Southwest. Almaguer points out that the representation of indigenous populations as "savage heathens was significant for the social organization of the colonial economy" (1994:22). Nowhere was the material relation between the representation of indigenous people as "inferior others" and the political processes and the social relations of American colonialism more evident than in the dispossession of the land (Seed 2001; Spring 200 la; Williams 1997). The Europeans' assumed cultural superiority and what they believed it entitled them to vis-à-vis indigenous people is clearly explained by Seed (2001):

> Europeans uniformly explained that they were displacing Native Americans and seizing their labor, land and other valuable commodities because the conduct of the indigenous people failed to conform to the Europeans' expectations of society. Finding that natives failed to value or to exploit the resources the Europeans believed to be profitable, the Europeans declared natives to be ineffectual or unworthy users of their riches.…their qualifications stemmed from the inferiority of the "Indians." (5–6)

Of fundamental importance is that the scholars cited above (Almaguer 1994; De Leon 1983; Deloria 1997; Seed 2001; Spring 200 la; Trouillot 1995; and Williams

1997) argue that the systems of knowledge and modes of representation that accompanied and sustained the white-privileging internal colonialism and domestic imperialism of the United States are alive and well in the present. One need only to consider the following to see the veracity of their contention: the recent CIA support for genocidal wars against indigenous people in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador; the passage of Proposition 187 in California; the daily deaths at the U.S.–Mexico border; the racial profiling and continuous murder of African Americans by police forces; the mascot of the professional football team from Washington, D.C.; the dominant regimes of knowledge in the academy; the discourse surrounding Indian casinos; and the "color" of the hands and the logics of the minds that administer the reins of economic, political, and cultural power in American society. That most contemporary descendants of both the colonizer and the colonized fail to see and understand how the past exists in the present speaks volumes to the bru tal effectiveness of Anglo colonization and the genocidal efficiency of the processes and practices of deculturalization, Americanization, and ideological management that have found their clearest expression in American schooling (Spring, 1992, 200 la, 200 1b). Today, for example, Mexicana(o)/Chicana(o) youth are much more likely to join the Armed forces of the United States than to identify as deculturalized descendants of indigenous peoples.

Theorizations and notions from postcolonial studies, then, contribute to our conceptualization of a decolonizing pedagogical praxis. As evidenced above, however, we ground these notions in the long tradition of scholarship and dissenting voices in African American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Native American Studies that predate the recent postcolonial vogue yet continue to be ghettoized within the mainstream academy.

SPATIAL THEORY

Our call for the conception and practice of a decolonizing pedagogy also incorporates and builds on the work of spatial theorists. A key premise of spatial theory is that *space matters fundamentally to social life;* it cannot be "reduced to a stage" on which social and historical actors play out their destiny (Carter 1995: 375–76). Space must be conceptualized as more than a "passive container of powerful economic and social processes" (Daniels and Lee 1996:11). Haymes (1995), for example, argues that white supremacist discourses have racialized urban space and that those racialized urban spaces have affected both the positionality of blacks and black subjectivities. Theorizing the relationship between space and status, Spain contends that "gendered spaces" deny women access to knowledge employed by men to produce and maintain power and privilege (1992:3). Rose (1993) interrogates geography's epistemological foundations and its conception of space, and then juxtaposes them with a review of feminist work on women and everyday spaces to argue that the space of geography's focus is riddled with a masculinism that has marginalized women

from the field and the focus on women within the field. These scholars are articulating a theorization of space that can greatly inform our historical understanding of the domination and oppression of native peoples in the Americas (Tejeda 2000a) and is fundamental to our conception of social existence in the internal neocolonial context of the United States. This theorization posits that space matters with regards to social interaction, race, class, gender, identity formation, and power, and that it is integral to domination, oppression, and exploitation because it is inextricably bound to social existence. It cannot, "be dealt with as if it were merely an abstract arena on which things happen" (Keith and Pile 1993:2).

The cornerstone of this insistence on the spatiality of social life is an ontological conception of space. This ontological conception, implied in the spatial assertions of various theorists (Foucault 1986; Spain 1992; Rose 1993; Keith and Pile 1993; Ligget and Perry 1995; Daniels and Lee 1996; Hamnett 1996), is best articulated by Soja (1989, 1996). He explains that taking space seriously requires "a deconstruction and reconstitution of critical thought and analysis at every level of abstraction, including ontology" (1989:7). Soja (1989, 1996) calls for a critical sensibility toward space that is grounded in an ontological conception that situates spatiality right alongside historicality and sociality. According to this ontological conception, our being-in-the-world "is existentially definable as being that is simultaneously historical, social, and spatial" (1989:73). From this conception of "being-in-the-world," it is no less important to think about the spatial acting on social and historical beings than it is to think about the social or the historical acting on spatial beings.

Space, we argue, is complicit in the domination, oppression, and exploitation of working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples in the internal colonial contexts of the United States. As Daniels and Lee state, "geography has a history of complicity in socially destructive attempts to reshape the world" (1996:5). Jacobs (1996) is even more explicit in signaling the importance of understanding colonialism from a spatial perspective. She writes that the expressions and negotiations of imperialism in contemporary first world cities do not simply occur in space, but are about "a politics of identity and power that articulates itself *through* space and is, fundamentally, *about* space*"* (1996:1). She adds that people in contemporary cities are "connected by imperial histories" and that their interactions are "still regulated by imperialism's constructs of difference and privilege" (4). Camarillo made a similar argument about the existence of the past in the present. He wrote of the failure of scholars to recognize the influence of nineteenth century developments on twentieth century experiences" (1979:4).

Space is more than simply *where* conquest and colonialism have occurred; it has been integral to the very operation of colonial domination and oppression. As Tejeda (2000b) argues,

> …the conquering and subsequent domination of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas (which gave birth to the wandering, toiling, and

> undereducated Chicana(o)/Latina(o) of the 20th century—those in Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador, as well as those whose lives brushstroke the social landscapes of Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Chicago) occurred in and marked a space to no less a degree that it occurred in and marked a time. And that space has in turn marked and acted on the indigenous peoples and their (mestizo/Mexicano/Chicano/Latino/Hispanic) descendants to no less a degree than time (history). (138)

Tejeda contends that the representation and production of native peoples as illegal aliens are a product of particularly defined and practiced space acting on social subjects to no less a degree than the "imagined community of the United States" is a product of social subjects acting on space. Theorizing the significance of the representation of space and the impact of spatial representation on bodies, Tejeda (2000a) posits the following:

> …to a large extent, the dominant discourses through which the spaces of Southern California are lived by their inhabitants are the white supremacist discourses that yesterday rationalized the Anglo conquest and colonization of the region (see Almaguer 1994) and today signify Anglos (white bodies) as a natural extension of those spaces, as entitled to the geography and its resources, while signifying Mexicano immigrants (brown bodies) as alien and un-natural to those spaces, as un-entitled. What's more, I would argue that the type of notions and practices theorized through the constructs of *whiteness* and *whiteness as property* (see McLaren 1997; Harris 1993) undergird and imbue both the anti-immigrant and anti-affirmative action discourses and social actions which currently undermine the educational opportunities and experiences of the ChCh/LL population—discourses which, inscribed on the very flesh of body/subjects (McLaren 1995), frame struggles that are essentially about social spaces (the academy, the workplace, the nation-state) and racialized body/subjects' access and entitlement to those spaces. (52–53)

Hence, we argue that the spatial dimension of our lives in the internal neocolonial context of the United States defines our social existence to no less a degree than the social and historical dimension of our lives. We further argue that there is a need to analyze, investigate, and understand the spatial dimension of our social existence in the internal neocolonial contexts of the United States with the same conceptual and methodological rigor that we analyze, investigate, and attempt to understand the social and historical dimension of this existence. Space matters fundamentally to social life, which is something indigenous people, at least those that have yet to be culturally and epistemologically colonized, have known all along.

In discussing a postcolonial psychology that acknowledges how the systematic genocide of the last five hundred years has devastated indigenous communities, Duran (1995) argues the following:

> One of the first ideas that must be kept in mind when thinking about the native American worldview from a Western perspective is that the native temporal approach to the world is different from that of Western people. Western thought conceptualizes history in a linear temporal sequence, whereas most Native American thinking conceptualizes history in a spatial fashion. Temporal thinking means that time is thought of as having a beginning and end; spatial thinking views events as a function of space or where the event actually took place. (14)

We are, unfortunately, not among those that have long known about the significance of space. We occupy indigenous bodies as we write; yet we come to know and understand things our indigenous ancestors have long known and understood, not from them but from those who voice from Euro-American academy. The brutality of colonization has meant for some of us that we must speak to and about ourselves through the colonizing other. In writing this chapter and arriving at this realization, we have come to see that our Indian bodies often move to the rhythms and the logics of a colonized mind. We have come to recognize that our indigenous corporality has enfleshed (McLaren 1995) a colonial mentality that is present in our very efforts toward the dissenting literacies of decolonizing pedagogy. We are forced to see that internal neocolonialism inhabits our minds and is enconcretized through our bodies. We can also see, however, that in developing this realization we have been engaging in decolonizing praxis.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

We also draw on Critical Race Theory to understand better how an internal neocolonial condition (i.e., white privilege and control) is maintained through past and current formal and informal mechanisms of racial subjugation and inequality. In particular, this theoretical perspective allows us to understand how the legal system functions to sustain white privilege, or the status quo camouflaged as color-blind, across sociopolitical, economic, and educational contexts, practices, and institutions. This theory helps explain how, despite the changes brought about through the Civil Rights Movement and thereafter, white privilege and its attempts to nullify difference persevere.

Our lives and those of our students provide the context for our understanding the role the law has played in shaping and sustaining racial oppression in the U.S. Southwest. Experience alone, however, cannot account for everything. Conversely, theory in isolation from experience is deprived of the vigor of the situated perspective. It is in the coincidence of the two that helps ensure the

robustness and validity of the analysis. Consequently, we draw upon the work of particular critical race scholars who prioritize the experiences poor, dark-skinned, and indigenous people have had with the U.S. legal system (Crenshaw 1995; Delgado 1995). Their work renders visible the mechanisms by which dominant color-blind interpretations of the Constitution serve to legitimate and maintain the social, economic, and political advantages that whites hold over other American citizens (Gotanda 1995). These critical race scholars documented how property rights and racial and economic subordination have collaborated since the birth of this country to create the racialized system of oppression that lives today (Harris 1993). Central to a decolonizing perspective is understanding how primitive and contemporary forms of capital accumulation and racism have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. In other words, the motivation for expropriating indigenous people from their means of subsistence (i.e., the land that subsequently, through the magical language of the law, transformed into the settler's property) was never solely about capitalism or racism. Our decolonizing analysis, instead, focuses on the central role the relationship between capitalism and racism played in the birth and consolidation of the United States.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

McLaren describes critical pedagogy as a radical theory of education that is "irrevocably committed to the side of the oppressed" (1998:164). He explains that it is a theoretical approach that is continuously annexing advances in social theory and developing new categories of inquiry and new methodologies to pose "a variety of important counterlogics to the positivistic, ahistorical, and depoliticized analysis employed by both liberal and conservative critics of schooling" (163). Various scholars have signaled that one of critical pedagogy's essential characteristics is that it cannot be reduced to a single conception or a homogenous set of theories and methodologies (McLaren 1998; Wink 1997; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996). There are, nonetheless, a number of theoretical premises and positions orienting the work and politics of most critical pedagogues that can greatly inform our understanding of schooling in the internal neocolonial context of the contemporary United States.

The following are theorizations that inform our conception of schooling and its function in our internal neocolonial contexts: educational theories and practices should encourage and assist students and teachers to develop understandings of the relationships among culture, ideology, and power (Giroux 1981, 1988; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996); schooling is characterized by complexities, contradictions, multiple realities, and change (Wink 1997); the processes and practices of schooling must be understood in their historical context and as a part of the existing social, political, and cultural fabric of society (McLaren 1998); schooling should be understood and analyzed as a process in which certain social groups are positioned within asymmetrical relations of power on the basis of race, class, and gender; schooling serves primarily the

interest of the wealthy and powerful classes in society while working against the needs and interests of the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, and women (McLaren 1998; Wink 1997); the agency of social subjects should be a central focus in the analysis and understanding of schooling—in other words, teachers and students should be seen as participants in history, rather than merely objects that are acted upon, manipulated, and controlled (Giroux 1983a, 1983b; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996); history is the product of social praxis and through social praxis a radically different world can be brought into existence; a fundamental objective of pedagogy should be to empower the oppressed and contribute to the transformation of the social relations and formations that produce social inequalities and injustices (McLaren 1998; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996); schooling for self and social empowerment should be ethically prior to the mastery of technical skills (McLaren 1998; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996); and, the modernist notions of objective inquiry, universal reason, and absolute truth should be challenged and the claims of a universal foundation for culture or truth should be rejected (McLaren 1995; Leistyna, Woodrum, and Sherblom 1996).

THE CURRICULAR CONTENTS OF A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS AND ITS CULTURAL-HISTORICAL CONCEPTION OF LEARNING AND COGNITION

Shortly after the military phase of the Spanish conquest, the Aristotelian philosopher Juan Gines de Sepulveda, the Dominican priest Bartolome de Las Casas, and their contemporaries debated whether "the Indian" should be educated and, if so, to what end (Hanke 1974). Conceptualizing indigenous people as children, Thomas L.McKenney, superintendent of Indian trade, argued that the creation of tribal school systems run by white missionaries could culturally transform Native Americans in one generation; his ideas were enacted by the U.S. Congress in the Civilization Act of 1819 (Spring 200 la). Those type of debates and arguments and their underlying ideologies of cultural and racial superiority have persisted into the present. They continue to largely define the educational opportunities and schooling experiences of indigenous and nonwhite peoples throughout the Americas. The United States, of course, is no exception.

One need only consider the recent propositions in the state of California to see how voices from the past speak loudly in our present. The electorate in the state actually voted to deny education to children who could not prove their legal status in the country. It then voted to rescind affirmative action programs that functioned to increase educational access and opportunity for nonwhite people. Most recently, the same electorate voted to deny the Spanish-speaking population in the state the opportunity to be educated in its own language. Indeed, the violence against indigenous and nonwhite peoples institutionalized during America's colonial past continues in its internal neocolonial present. We

insist that there can be no social justice in the context of this violence, and that the struggle for social justice necessarily implies a struggle within and against the institutions that perpetuate, legitimize, or conceal the multiple forms of violence perpetuated against working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples. This is not a struggle that will be waged with AK-47s; it is a struggle that must be waged with pedagogies, and we call for engaging in that struggle through a decolonizing pedagogical praxis in the classroom.

By calling for a decolonizing pedagogical praxis, it is not us who propose to politicize the curriculum and place the school at the service of political ends. The school in American society has been implicated in the politics of colonial domination from its inception. The deculturalization and Americanization that dominant groups saw as integral to cultural, political, and economic domination of indigenous and nonwhite peoples have always found a most hospitable site and effective mechanism in the school (Spring 2001 a, 2001 b).

THE CURRICULAR CONTENT OF A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGY

What is the subject matter of a decolonizing pedagogy? What do teachers and students engaged in decolonizing pedagogical praxis teach and learn from one another? We contend that developing a critical consciousness of our internal neocolonial condition and its possible transformation is fundamental to what teachers and students do in decolonizing pedagogical spaces. This requires explicit attention to the history and contemporary manifestations of internal neocolonialism in a manner that clearly explicates their social origin and rejects their historical consequence. It also introduces students to robust theories and conceptual frameworks that provide them the analytical tools to excavate history and examine the present. It is a pedagogical content that must be guided by a conceptually dynamic worldview and a set of values that are anticapitalist, antiracist, antisexist, and antihomophobic.

We view the contents described above as necessarily contingent and context-specific. While internal neocolonialism indelibly marks all social existence and largely defines every dimension of life, it assumes diverse forms and is experienced differently in the various social spaces of American society. Hence, we contend that the specific history and specific manifestations of neocolonialism that students and teachers engage should be determined by the particular social spaces of their existence—the specific places and social contexts where they experience internal neocolonialism. Likewise, the specific theorizations and conceptual frameworks that students and teachers engage should be determined by the specificity of neocolonial domination and exploitation in the social spaces they inhabit. The content of a decolonizing pedagogical praxis on an Indian reservation, for example, would necessarily be different than the content of a decolonizing pedagogical praxis in the urban spaces of metropolitan Los

Angeles. In other words, the content is situated and contingent and thus open to continuous modification and expansion.

While history and social science courses are seemingly ideal and most immediately relevant for addressing the history and current manifestations of internal neocolonialism, we call for decolonizing pedagogical praxis across the curriculum. All curricular subject matter (e.g., the social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences) can be used to examine neocolonial conditions or can be engaged in a manner that addresses the neocolonial production, utilization, and/or effects of its related bodies of knowledge. Whether we engage students in the learning of mathematics, history and social studies, language arts, chemistry, physics, or vocational skills, the content of our pedagogy highlights, examines, and discusses transforming the mutually reinforcing systems of neocolonial and capitalist domination and exploitation in the United States. Our proposed pedagogy also necessarily addresses how working-class indigenous and nonwhite teachers and students are assaulted by multiple and mutually constitutive forms of violence in the various dimensions of their daily lives. In this way, a decolonizing praxis seeks to provide students with a rich theoretical, analytical, and pragmatic toolkit for individual and social transformation.

While we argue for a specific curricular focus for a decolonizing pedagogical praxis, we are also committed to ensuring students the opportunity to master the traditional curriculum necessary for academic success within the present system of schooling. We do not, however, argue for ignoring or replacing the official curricular content for which students are held accountable. While we see the need to problematize and expose the official curriculum's complicity with neocolonial domination and exploitation, we know that failing to prepare students in the mastery of this curriculum only sets them up for academic failure and its related social consequences. The decolonizing pedagogical praxis we propose sets out, for example, to prepare high school students to dynamically critique and actively work against neocolonialism while preparing and making them selves eligible for admission to and success at the most prestigious universities in the United States. Such contradictions are inevitable in internal neocolonial contexts.

DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS AND THE CULTURAL-HISTORICAL CONCEPTION OF LEARNING AND COGNITION

A decolonizing pedagogical praxis challenges not only the forms, content, and intent of other pedagogies and their historical antecedents, but also requires a complete reconceptualization of the social organization of learning in schooling institutions and fundamentally in classrooms. Such a reconceptualization calls for a transformation in the social and intellectual relationships among the participants both in schools and in particular communities in which the schools reside. To date, the most productive theory of human development from our

perspective—one that aligns with a decolonizing perspective—is cultural-historical activity theory (Cole 1996; Gutierrez 2000; Moll 2000; Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1985, 1991). At its core, cultural-historical or sociocultural theory recognizes the fundamentally relational nature of teaching and learning, the microgenetic, sociohistorical, and cultural planes, and the centrality of culture in human development. Its dynamic and processual notion of culture requires a focus on everyday practice within larger systems of activity that are, of course, always socially and culturally organized. As Cole and Engestrom argue, "A natural unit of analysis for the study of human behavior is activity systems, historically conditioned systems of relations among individuals and their proximal, culturally organized environments" (1993:8). From our perspective, these practices are inescapably organized within particular neocolonial spaces of domination and oppression.

From this perspective, teaching and learning cannot be disconnected from the larger contexts of their development, from the microgenetic or moment-to-moment and its larger sociohistorical context. This simultaneous focus on historicity and the quotidian requires us to understand the practices of schools as inseparable from our contemporary neocolonial contexts. For us, cultural-historical activity theory provides both a theoretical lens and methodological toolkit for examining and understanding how cultural artifacts that are both material and ideational mediate human beings' interaction with their social worlds. As such, tools or artifacts are never neutral and always a particular politic.

Conceptualizing teaching and learning as fundamentally situated and socially mediated forces us to always ground instructional practices in the present and past realities of teachers and students and to organize learning in ways that promote and assist their potential. Inherent in cultural historical theory is a pedagogy of potential in that its primary concern is on what students can accomplish with assistance in robust contexts of learning (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejeda 2000). But here we argue not for contexts that treat all contents, practices, and ways of organizing learning as neutral but rather we argue for contexts in which knowing and knowledge lead to a critical consciousness that guides action toward a transformation of our neocolonial condition.

Within a decolonizing perspective, cultural-historical activity theory can be used to examine and expose the ways the social constructs of race and ethnicity and its proxies, language and ability, achievement and underachievement, as well as the social practices of racism, discrimination, and privileging mediate the schooling outcomes of working-class indigenous and nonwhite students (Gutierrez et al. in press). In doing so, we create new social relations and systems of activity that move toward a fundamentally different instantiation of social justice—one that is defined by historically colonized peoples.

CONCLUSION

The discourses of equity, access, and democracy act as currency in the political economy of academia. The race, class, gender, and sexuality of those who traffic in these discourses weigh heavily on the development of these modes of thought. The question of social justice *by* whom begs us to ask the question: Social justice for *whom?* We move away from notions of social justice that seek to create social space for the poor, dark-skinned, and indigenous to be more like their oppressors.

The ideology that pervades liberal notions of social justice is that of a hopeful Americanism. For all its talk against the social ills of racism and economic inequalities, it fails to translate into a lived praxis that adequately contests the multiplicity of ways racism, capitalism, homophobia, privilege, and sexism are made manifest. We assert that these social ills cannot be combated simply by pressing the popgun of liberal, middle-class love against the bosom of oppressive social structures. Particular strains of social justice bestow upon capitalism immunity against criticism and anticapitalist action. We challenge progressive educators to walk with us, rather than defining the places, spaces, and modes for the inclusion of our voices and our experiences.

We seek to reposition to the center of this discourse those who have been silenced in the classroom—those who endure and have endured the internal neocolonial condition. We seek to reclaim our intellectual heritage and argue that any notion of social justice that informs education in the United States must be derivative of and informed by the experiences and interpretations of those living an internal neocolonial existence.

We argue the need for re-membering the brown body as central to social analysis and knowledge production. Thus, the integrity of the indigenous mind/body is the standard by which we measure the success of any decolonizing pedagogy.

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