

Global Crises, Social Justice, and Teacher Education

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Abstract

When the U.S. government released its 2007 census figures in January 2010, it reported that 12% of the U.S. population—more than 38 million people—were foreign born. First-generation people were now one out of every eight persons in the nation, with 80% coming from Latin America and Asia. This near-record transformation, one in which diasporic populations now constitute a large and growing percentage of communities throughout the nation and an ever-growing proportion of children in our schools, documents one of the most profound reasons that we must think globally about education. This transformation is actually something of which we should be proud. The United States and a number of other nations are engaged in a vast experiment that has rarely been attempted before. Can we build a nation and a culture from resources and people from all over the world? The impacts of these global population flows on education and on teacher education are visible all around us.

Keywords

critical theory/critical pedagogy, educational policy, globalization

When the U.S. government released its 2007 census figures in January 2010, it reported that 12% of the U.S. population—more than 38 million people—were foreign born. First-generation people were now one out of every eight persons in the nation, with 80% coming from Latin America and Asia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This near-record transformation, one in which diasporic populations now constitute a large and growing percentage of communities throughout the nation and an ever-growing proportion of children in our schools, documents one of the most profound reasons that we must think globally about education. This transformation is actually something of which we should be proud. The United States and a number of other nations are engaged in a vast experiment that has rarely been attempted before. Can we build a nation and a culture from resources and people from all over the world? The impacts of these global population flows on education and on teacher education are visible all around us.

No discussion of globalization and its relation to teacher education can be sufficient without an understanding of globalization in general.¹ Because of this, in this article I want to do a number of things. First, I want to argue for a broader understanding of globalization and its effects and point to some implications that this has for teachers and teacher educators as they try to comprehend and act on their changing situations. Second, I shall remind us of some “first principles” that should guide our understanding and actions. Third, I will point to some key works that should be required reading for anyone who wants to take seriously the realities of the

effects of globalization on many of the countries and regions from where new populations may come. And, finally, I provide a detailed set of tasks in which critically democratic educators and researchers need to engage if we are to take seriously our responsibilities in building and defending institutions, practices, and intellectual/political traditions that will enable us to understand and act on current realities. My agenda is a large one. Because of this, I can only outline a series of steps toward more critical understandings of globalization. But our problems are large as well. In my notes and references, I provide further resources that are critical for going further into the issues I raise.

Understanding Globalization

If one were to name an issue that can be found near the top of the list of crucial topics within the critical education literature, it would be *globalization*. It is a word with extraordinary currency. This is the case not only because of trendiness. Exactly the opposite is true. It has become ever more clear that education cannot be understood without recognizing that nearly all educational policies and practices are strongly

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influenced by an increasingly integrated international economy that is subject to severe crises; that reforms and crises in one country have significant effects in others; and that immigration and population flows from one nation or area to another have tremendous impacts on what counts as official knowledge, what counts as a responsive and effective education, what counts as appropriate teaching, and the list could continue for quite a while (see Burbules & Torres, 2009; Dale & Robertson, 2009; Peters, 2005; Rhoads & Torres, 2006). Indeed, as I show in *Educating the "Right" Way* (Apple, 2006) and *Global Crises, Social Justice, and Education* (Apple, 2010a), all of these social and ideological dynamics and many more are now fundamentally restructuring what education does, how it is controlled, and who benefits from it throughout the world.

While localities and national systems affect the processes of globalization differently and provide different contexts for struggles, a homogenization of educational policies and practices, driven by what Santos (2003) calls "monocultural logics," is very clearly evident within and between settings. These logics are very visible in current education policies both inside and outside of teacher education that privilege choice, competition, performance management, individual responsibility, and "risk management," as well as a series of attacks on the cultural gains made by dispossessed groups (Apple, Ball, & Gandin, 2010). Neoliberal, neoconservative, and managerial impulses can be found throughout the world, cutting across both geographical boundaries and even economic systems. This points to the important "spatial" aspects of globalization. Policies are "borrowed" and "travel" across borders in such a way that these neoliberal, neoconservative, and managerial impulses are extended throughout the world, and alternative or oppositional forms and practices are marginalized or attacked (Gulson & Symes, 2007, p. 9). The fact that the attacks by conservative think tanks on teacher education institutions in the United States are now surfacing in many other nations documents part of this dynamic. The additional fact that performance pay for teachers is now part of official government policy in China at the same time that it is having major effects in discussions of and policies on teaching in the United States is yet another indication of the ways in which policies concerning teaching and teacher education travel well beyond their original borders.

The insight that stands behind the focus on globalization in general can perhaps best be summarized in the words of a character in a novel about the effects of the British Empire (Rushdie, 1981). To paraphrase what he says, "The problem with the English is that they don't understand that their history constantly occurs outside their borders." We could easily substitute words such as "Americans" and others for "English."

There is a growing literature on globalization and education. This is undoubtedly important, and a significant portion of this literature has provided us with powerful understandings of the realities and histories of empire and postcolonialism(s);

the interconnected flows of capital, populations, knowledge, and differential power and the ways in which thinking about the local requires that we simultaneously think about the global. But as I argue in the next section of this article, a good deal of it does not go far enough into the realities of the global crises so many people are experiencing, or it assumes that the crises and their effects on education are the same throughout the world. Indeed, the concept of globalization itself needs to be historicized and seen as partly hegemonic, since at times its use fails to ground itself in "the asymmetries of power between nations and colonial and neo-colonial histories, which see differential national effects of neoliberal globalization" (Lingard, 2007, p. 239).

This is not only analytically and empirically problematic, but it may also cause us to miss the possible roles that critical teacher education—and critical education and mobilizations around it in general—can play in mediating and challenging the differential benefits that the crises are producing in many different locations. Any discussion of these issues needs to be grounded in the complex realities of various nations and regions and in the realities of the social, cultural, and educational movements and institutions of these nations and regions. Doing less than that means that we all too often simply throw slogans at problems rather than facing the hard realities of what needs to be done—and what is being done now. But slogans about globalization and what is needed to help teacher educators and our current and future teachers understand its nature and effects are certainly not sufficient given current realities.

One of the main problems is that teachers and teacher educators are left with all-too-general stereotypes about "what diasporic children and their parents are like" and what the conditions are in the places from which they come. But effective teaching requires not only that we understand students, their communities, and their histories where they live now but also that we understand the sum of their experiences before they came to the United States. Superficial knowledge may not be much better than no knowledge at all. It may also paint a picture of parents and youth as passive "victims" of global forces, rather than as people who are active agents continually struggling both in their original nations and regions and here in the United States to build a better life for themselves, their communities, and their children. Thus, teachers and teacher educators need to know much more about the home countries—and about the movements, politics, and *multiple* cultural traditions and conflicts from where diasporic populations come.

Let me give an example. In my own university, the fastest growing minor for students enrolled in our elementary teacher education program is Spanish. This is based on a recognition of the ways in which global flows of people from the South to the North are having profound effects on educational policies and practices and on the resources that current and future teachers require given this. I do not want to speak against this choice of a minor at all. Indeed, I have a good deal of

respect for future and current teachers who are willing to engage with diasporic students in “their own language.”

But the final words in the above paragraph speak powerfully to my point about knowing more about the politics and multiple cultural traditions of home countries. Many of the students from, say, Mexico and other Latin American nations speak *indigenous* languages as their first language. Spanish is their second language. In their home countries and regions, there are powerful movements among indigenous groups and their progressive allies to defend these languages and cultures. Not understanding this political history and the cultural traditions and struggles associated with it can lead teachers to assume that students being taught in Spanish who do not do well in spite of this are “less intelligent,” are in need of “special education” and other interventions. Having a much more detailed sense of and sensibility toward the complexities of the regions from which students come and the political and cultural movements and struggles there would be absolutely essential for creating curricular and teaching practices that are culturally relevant (see Apple & Beane, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994). But this would also help prevent us from misrecognizing the actions of parents and communities in the areas in which the schools sit and the areas from where the people originally may have come.

This recognition of agency, of people and movements actively engaged in building a better future both “here and there,” would go a long way in reducing the tendencies among many educators in the United States to assume that they have nothing to learn from the global flows of people who are now transforming our nation and so many others. This is a crucial point. Major transformations in education and social life *are* going on in those nations and regions from where so many people are coming. Those of us in education here have much to learn about how we might transform our own often overly bureaucratic and at times strikingly unequal institutions by looking at other nations’ experiences and seeing people who have come from these nations as *resources*, not only as problems.

Let me give an example here. There are powerful models that specify more critical moments and processes in education from which we could learn, with the work of Luis Armando Gandin on the justly well-known reforms in Porto Alegre, Brazil (see, e.g., Apple et al., 2003; Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009; Gandin, 2006; Gandin & Apple, 2003), and Mario Novelli’s (2007) discussion of the ways in which trade union activism led to critical learning and new identities in Colombia being among the more important. Gandin’s analysis of the reforms in Porto Alegre—reforms that are having important influences throughout Latin America—has major implications for teaching and teacher education, since the growth and acceptance of more critically democratic educational policies and practices there could not have been accomplished without the participation of a core of well-prepared and critically reflexive teachers. We have much to learn from these reforms that link together major critically

democratic transformations in both social and educational policy and practice and in the close connections between teacher education and these transformations. The account that Kenneth Zeichner and Lars Dahlstrom (1999) give of the limits and possibilities of more democratic teacher education in parts of Africa also serves as a good example of the kind of work that needs to be done as well.

These examples of critical work in nations outside the United States should not make us assume that discussions of globalization are only about “other” countries. Any complete analysis of the United States needs to be situated in the global realities here. This involves a probing investigation of an increasingly diverse society, one where major economic changes and the realities of multiculturalism, “race,” “diaspora,” and immigration play crucial roles, as does the fact that even with the legacy of such policies as No Child Left Behind there is relatively weak central governmental control over education. Economic transformations, the creation of both paid and casualized and often racialized labor markets that are increasingly internationalized and unequal, demands for new worker identities and skills—and all of this in a time of severe economic crisis—are having profound effects (Apple, 2010a). None of this can be understood without also recognizing the ways in which the realities of the United States are influenced and often shaped by our connections with economic, political, and cultural policies, movements, and struggles outside our official borders.

A critical question remains, however. *How* are we to understand these global realities and relations critically? This requires that we also criticize some of the accepted tenets of critical analysis in education itself. In some of the critical literature, there seems to be an unstated assumption that one can comprehend global realities through the use of a single lens—through class politics *or* gender *or* race—or more lamentably, that poststructural analyses are total replacements for structural understandings. Yet no one dynamic nor one single theory is sufficient (Apple, 2006; 2010b). It is the intersection of and sometimes contractions among multiple dynamics and histories—what is called in the literature on critical race theory “intersectionality” (Gillborn, 2008)—where we can find a more adequate sensitivity to the utter complexities surrounding globalization and its effects. When one adds to this a set of compelling understandings of “empire” and colonial and postcolonial realities (Apple, 2010a), we get much closer to the complex foundations of the growing transformations of populations in the United States and other nations and the ways in which they understand the world and their place in it (see Apple, 2000; Apple & Buras, 2006; Fraser, 1997; Gillborn, 2008; Leonardo, 2009; Rege, 2003; Stambach, 2000).

These complexities require an analysis of many things that are foundational for a more thorough comprehension of what we face in education and of the causes of these conditions: political economy and the structure of paid and unpaid work both in the United States and in the countries from where

diasporic people come; the ways in which these realities are structured and experienced differently around such markers as class, gender, race, region, and increasingly religion; the identities that people bring with them and the ways in which these identities are transformed in the process of building a life here; and the fact that many people have hybrid identities based on their experiences of constantly crossing geographical borders as they go back and forth between countries, living basically in both (see, e.g., Lee, 2005, 2009; Sarroub, 2005; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Vélez-Ibáñez & Sampaio, 2002).

Because of all this, the situation we face in education also demands a rich mix of theoretical and critical traditions, all of them appropriately political, that deal with both of the sets of dynamics that Nancy Fraser (1997) had identified as crucial to the reconstruction of our core institutions: the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. The first refers to the ways in which the economy works, how it is controlled, and who benefits from it. The second deals with cultural struggles over identity, the gaining or denial of respect, and the basic ways in which people are recognized or misrecognized as fully human and deserving of rights.

Of course, there are those who would reject this more integrative approach, who believe that there is only one way a critical scholar/activist can be legitimately critical. For them, an approach that seeks to deal respectfully with and learn from critical theories and resources from multiple sources and multiple critical traditions is misguided. For me and many others, however, the key is to heed Fraser's (1997) aforementioned absolutely imperative call for a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition in ways that *do not interrupt* each other. Such an approach, one in which individuals learn respectfully from one another and respectfully disagree when necessary, is not an example of losing one's political soul. Indeed, as I have said before, while we need to be very cautious about theories that turn the world into simply discourses and that fly above the gritty materialities of real life, we are not in a church so we should not be worried about heresy (Apple, 2006). The key is the relationship between one's nuanced understanding and one's concrete political/educational action—and a willingness to build alliances and participate in the social agendas of other groups who suffer from the structures of this society. This will require using theoretical/political resources that are varied but still intensely political and committed.

Without expanding our critical theoretical and empirical resources, we will not be able to answer two of the most crucial questions facing educators and activists today: What do the global realities that increasingly challenge education and teacher education look like? And, what can we as educators and community members do to alter these realities?

Facing Reality

Before we go further, however, it is important to face reality, both in terms of the ways many educators, even many

progressives who say that they are committed to social justice in education, misrecognize the nature of educational reform in terms of the daily lives of millions upon millions of people throughout the world.

Let us be honest. Much of the literature on educational reform, including much of the mainstream literature in teacher education, exists in something of a vacuum. It fails to place schooling sufficiently in its social and political context, thereby evacuating any serious discussion of why schooling in so many nations plays the complex roles that it does. Class and gender relations, racializing dynamics and structures, political economy, discussions of empire and colonialism, and the connections between the state and civil society, for example, are sometimes hard to find or when they are found seem to be words that are not attached to any detailed analysis of how these dynamics actually work.

But this absence is not the more mainstream literature's only problem. It is all too often romantic, assuming both that education can drive economic transformations and that reforming schools by only focusing on the schools themselves and the teachers within them is sufficient. Policies that assume that instituting such things as performance pay for teachers or marketizing teacher education will basically solve the educational crises in inner cities provide clear examples of this tendency. When policy limits our attention only to schools, it cuts us off from powerful external interventions made in educational movements in communities among oppressed people. The naiveté of these positions is not only ahistorical; these positions also act as conceptual blocks that prevent us from focusing on the real social, ideological, and economic conditions to which education has a dialectical and profoundly intricate set of connections (Anyon, 2005). A concern for social justice may then become more rhetorical than its proponents would like.

One of the most important steps in understanding what this means is to reposition oneself to see the world as it looks like from below, not above. Closely connected to this is another step, one that is directly related to the topic of this essay. We need to think internationally, not only to see the world from below, but to see the social world *relationally*.² In essence, this requires that we understand that in order for there to be a "below" in one nation, this usually requires that there be an "above" both in that nation and in those nations with which it is connected in the global political economy. Indeed, this demand that educators think relationally and face the realities of the global political, economic, and cultural context has been one of the generative impulses behind the growth of critical analyses of the relationship between globalization and education in the first place (Apple, 2010a; Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005).

Any future or current teachers who wish to take the issue of teaching in a global world seriously need to understand global realities *much* better than they often do today. For example, in *Cultural Politics and Education* (Apple, 1996), I spend a good deal of time discussing the relationship among

“cheap French fries,” the internationalization of the production of farm commodities, and the production of inequalities inside and outside of education. I focus on the connections between the lack of schools, well-educated teachers, health care, decent housing, and similar kinds of things in one particular Asian nation—all of which lead to immense immiseration—and the constant pressure to drive down the cost of labor in the imperial center. My basic point is that the connections between the exploitation of identifiable groups of people in the “Third World” and the demand for cheap commodities—in this case potatoes—here in the United States may not be readily visible, but they are none/the/less real and extremely damaging. We might think of it as the “Wal-Martization” of the world economy.

Powerful descriptions of these relations are crucial, and as conditions worsen, some deeply committed scholars are bearing witness to these realities in compelling ways. Perhaps one particularly powerful author’s work can serve as an example. It is a book that should be required reading for any teacher and teacher educator who wants to get a clearer picture of the conditions of people’s lives and of the resiliency and struggles in many of those nations and regions from where new populations are coming. If ever there was a doubt in anyone’s mind about the growth of these truly distressing conditions, Mike Davis’s volume *Planet of Slums* (2006) makes this reality crystal clear. At the same time, Davis powerfully illuminates both the extent of, and what it means to live (*exist* is a better word) in, the immiserating conditions created by our need for such things as the “cheap French fries” that I pointed to. Let me say more about Davis’s arguments, since many of them stand at the very root of a more adequate understanding of the realities a vast number of people face throughout the world.

Davis provides us with a powerful analysis of political economy, of structures of dominance, one of the key elements that I mentioned in building an adequate understanding of globalization. And he does this not simply by rhetorically challenging the economic, housing, ecological, educational, and other policies that are advanced by international bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and by dominant groups within the “less developed” world. Rather, Davis draws together empirical and historical evidence that demonstrates time and again not only the negative effects of dominant policies but also—given the realities of poor peoples’ lives—*why* such policies cannot succeed (see also Apple et al., 2009; Robertson & Dale, 2009). And he does this by placing all of these proposals for reform directly into the contradictory necessities of daily life in the increasingly large and growing slums throughout the “less developed” world.

One third of the global urban population now lives in slums. Even more staggering is the fact that more than 78% of urbanites in the least developed countries live in slums (Davis, 2006, p. 23). The economic crisis in these slums is experienced by the people living there in ways that are

extraordinarily powerful. Rather than thinking about “jobs” in the usual sense of that term, it is better to think of “informal survivalism” as the major mode of existence in a majority of Third World cities (Davis, 2006, p. 178).

Echoing the situation I described at the beginning of this section, Davis (2006) is clear on what is happening throughout the Third World:

As local safety nets disappeared, poor farmers became increasingly vulnerable to any exogenous shock: drought, inflation, rising interest rates, or falling commodity prices. Or illness: an estimated 60 percent of Cambodian small peasants who sell their land and move to the city are forced to do so by medical debts. (p. 15)

This understanding allows him to show the dilemmas and struggles that people must face every day, dilemmas and struggles that should force us to recognize that for the poor certain words that we consider nouns are better thought of as *verbs*.

Take “housing,” for example. It is not a thing. Rather, it is the result of a complex, ongoing—and often dangerous—trade-off among contradictory needs. Thus, the urban poor who live in the slums “have to solve a complex equation as they try to optimize housing cost, tenure security, quality of shelter, journey to work, and . . . personal safety.” And while the very worst situation “is a . . . bad location without [government] services or security” (Davis, 2006, p. 29), in many instances these people have no choice. As Davis documents, the role of the IMF in this process is crucial to see. Its policies, ones expressly supported by the United States, have constantly created these conditions and made them considerably worse over time (Davis, 2006, pp. 66-69).

If all of this is so visible to Davis and many other committed people, why do the realities and very real complexities in this situation seem to be so readily ignored by governments, international agencies, and as Davis also demonstrates, a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)? Part of the explanation is that many Third World cities (and diasporic and poor populations of cities in the First World as well) exist in something like an epistemological fog, one that is sometimes willfully opaque. Most governments—and unfortunately not a few teachers in our urban areas and the teacher educators who teach them—know least about the slums, about the housing in them, about the services that their inhabitants need and (almost always) don’t get, and so on. The lack of knowledge here provides an epistemological veil (Davis, 2006, p. 42). What goes on under the veil is a secret that must be kept from “public view.” To know is to be subject to demands.³

It is important not to give the impression that the utter degradation that is being visited upon millions of people like the ones both Davis and I have pointed to has led only to a politics of simple acceptance. Indeed, as I argued earlier, one of the major elements we need to better understand is the

agency of oppressed people inside and outside of education. This is a crucial step in our rejecting the stereotypes that often go with an almost missionary sense that pervades teachers' perspectives on global immigrants: "They are passive, less intelligent, and need to be saved."

While Davis's book is not a conscious response to Spivak's well-known question, "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak, 1988), it does provide a number of insights into where and how we should look to recognize the agency that does exist. Such agency may be partial and even contradictory, but it is nearly always present (see Pedroni, 2007).

As Davis (2006) shows in his own accounts, the "informal proletariat" of these slums is decidedly *not* passive:

Even within a single city, slum populations can support a bewildering variety of responses to structural neglect and deprivation, ranging from charismatic churches and prophetic cults to ethnic militias, street gangs, neoliberal NGOs, and revolutionary social movements. But if there is no monolithic subject or unilateral trend in the global slum, there are nonetheless myriad acts of resistance. Indeed, the future of human solidarity depends upon the militant refusal of the urban poor to accept their terminal marginality within global capitalism. (p. 202)

Davis's discussion of the ways in which resistance operates and its organizations and forms is thoughtful. It helps us think through the manifold and sometimes contradictory voices and identities taken up by subaltern groups (Apple & Buras, 2006). Just as crucially, it documents how creative poor people are. This makes me stop and wonder whether many current and future teachers and many teacher educators actually recognize how powerfully resilient and creative the parents and communities of their diasporic students actually are. Only if these characteristics are recognized can we engage in a politics of recognition and respect and see global diasporic people as *resources of hope* in our schools and communities. They have already demonstrated through their lives how much they are willing to sacrifice and constantly struggle to assist their children in having a better life. Why do so many educators here in the United States look at them as if they were uncommitted to education and simply knowable by their economic circumstances now? Perhaps by thinking of words such as "housing" and "food" as *verbs*, as requiring constant labor and constant strategic and intelligent action, we might give "the others" the respect they have earned.

Planet of Slums provides us with a deeply honest account of the realities and complex struggles in which diasporic people engage. We cannot, however, ignore education's role in challenging such immiseration. Indeed, as the aforementioned example of Porto Alegre in Brazil so clearly shows, when deeply connected to a larger project of critical social transformation, educational transformations in schools, in the

relationship between schools and communities, and in teacher education can and do take on crucial roles in altering the relationship between the state and local communities, in radically challenging the unequal distribution of services, in helping to create new activist identities for slum dwellers and for the teachers of their children, and in using local resources to build new and very creative forms of oppositional literacy (Apple, 2010a; Apple et al., 2003; Apple & Buras, 2006; Fisher, 2009). Combining Davis's thoroughly unromantic picture of the conditions, struggles, and creative resilience of the poor with a recognition of the ways in which schools such as those in Porto Alegre can often serve as arenas for building toward larger social transformations (see Apple et al., 2003, 2009, 2010; Apple & Buras, 2006)—and how teacher education programs can participate in assisting in these transformations—can provide us with some of the tools we need to go forward.

Inside the Global North

My discussion in the previous part of this article has largely been on the Third World and the "Global South." But even given the immensity of the problems that are occurring in the slums to which Davis bears such eloquent witness, we also need to focus a good deal of our attention on what is (perhaps too arrogantly) called the "First World." We need to do this for a number of reasons. First, there is ever-growing immiseration within this part of society, stimulated by exploitative economic conditions and international divisions of labor and the border-crossing populations that accompany this, by the move toward what has been called "knowledge economies" and new definitions of what are "required skills"⁴ and of who does and does not have them (Apple, 2010a; Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, & Halsey, 2006), by the severe economic crisis so many nations are experiencing, and by the fact that in essence "the Empire has come home" (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982).

Second, as I mentioned earlier, we need to think relationally. There are extremely important connections between crises in the "center" and those on the "periphery." Of course, even using such words to describe these regions is to reproduce a form of the "imperial gaze" (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1993). Yet, not to focus on what is too easily called the center can lead us to forget something else. Not only do economic, political, and ideological crises in those nations "at the center" have disastrous consequences in other nations, but the more privileged lives of many people in these more advantaged nations also require that other people living there pay the costs in the physical and emotional labor that is so necessary to maintain that advantage.

As Pauline Lipman (2004) has clearly demonstrated in her discussion of educational reforms in Chicago, the advantages of the affluent in global cities (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and so many others) depend on the availability of low-paid—and gendered and raced—"others" who are

“willing” to do the labor that underpins the affluent lifestyles of those higher up on the economic ladder. No analysis of the realities of schooling in cities in the United States or of the relations between cities, suburbs, and rural areas in the United States can be complete without an understanding of how schooling is implicated in these relations. And no significant changes in preparing teachers to teach in these areas can be successful if these realities are not given due attention.

This is the case not only in our urban areas. Throughout the rural regions and small towns of the United States, large numbers of Latino/as are working on farms, in meatpacking plants, and in similar occupations. Their labor (often in deeply exploitative conditions) also underpins the “American lifestyle.” This says something important about what teachers and teacher educators often assume about globalization. It is seen as a “problem” of cities. This is decidedly not the case. Just as the growth of the U.S. economy depended originally on slavery, on the unpaid domestic labor of women in homes and on farms, on the removal of native populations from the land, on a large numbers of workers from all over the world, so too do we now massively benefit from the often unseen labor of these urban and rural workers today. Thus, once again, rather than seeing poor diasporic students and their parents and communities as problems to be “fixed,” we must first start out by acknowledging our *debt* to them. Their labor underpins our relative affluence.

Like all educators, teacher educators themselves need more adequate pictures, and theories that give these pictures meaning, that provide more powerful critical insights and descriptions of what all this means for our work. Having future and current teachers come to grips with a critical analysis that places the schools into urban and rural political economies, that demonstrates how the lives of so many more middle-class and affluent urban and suburban dwellers are fully dependent on low-paid and often disrespected immigrant labor, is crucial if teachers and their educators are to recognize the contributions of globalized workers both here in the United States and around the world. Critical intellectual resources—theoretical and historical—are essential tools here.

The Uses of “Powerful” Theory

To understand this fully, I need to say more about the word *theoretical* in the previous paragraph and its place in critical work in education on issues surrounding globalization. In so doing, I want to ground the current section of this article in what may seem a somewhat odd, and partly autobiographical, way. When I was being trained as a teacher (I use the word *trained* consciously), I went to a small state teachers college at night. Nearly every course that I took had a specific suffix—“for teachers.” I took Philosophy for Teachers, World History for Teachers, Mathematics for Teachers,

Physics for Teachers, and so on. The assumption seemed to be that since I had attended inner-city schools in a very poor community—a community that had a large immigrant population and had been rocked by economic decline caused by the mobility of capital and its factories as they moved to nations where labor was less organized and could be more completely exploited—and was going back to teach in those same inner-city schools, I needed little more than a cursory understanding of the world around me, of the disciplines of knowledge, and of the theories that stood behind them. Theory was for those who were above people such as me. As long as I had some grounding in various practical teaching methods, I would survive.

There were elements of good sense in this. After all, when I had been taught particular kinds of theory both at that small state teachers college and even at times later on in my graduate studies, it was all too often totally disconnected from the realities of impoverishment, racism, class dynamics, gendered realities, decaying communities and schools, cultural struggles, global forces, diasporic peoples, and the lives of teachers and community members. It too often also was disconnected from critically democratic educational practices. The realities of teaching, curriculum, and assessment in constantly changing urban and rural schools were in essence seen as forms of “pollution” that would somehow dirty our search for pure theory.

But the elements of bad sense, of being intellectually marginalized because of my class background, and of being positioned as a “less than” were palpable. For me and many others who grew up poor in that largely immigrant community and who wanted to understand more fully both our own experiences and why schooling, the economy, and indeed the world itself looked the way they did, the search for adequate explanations became crucial. Learning and using *powerful* theory, especially powerful *critical* theories, in essence, became a counterhegemonic act. Getting better at such theories, employing them to comprehend more fully the ways in which differential power actually worked, using them to see where alternatives could be and are being built in daily life, and ultimately doing all this in what we hoped were nonelitist ways gave us two things.

First, all of this made the realities and complexities of dominance both sensible and at times depressing. But, second, it also provided a sense of freedom and possibility, especially when it was connected to the political and educational *actions* in which many of us were also engaged. These same experiences could be spoken of by members of many other groups who have been marginalized by race, by sex/gender, by class, by colonialism, and by an entire array of other forms of differential power.

I say all this here because these memories remind me of some of the reasons why critical theoretical, historical, political, and empirical resources are so essential to creating a richer and more detailed understanding of the society in which

we live and the role of education and teacher education in it. New and more honest political and ethical perspectives provide resources for building and defending more politically and ethically wise responses in policies, schools, classrooms, and teacher education programs—if once again these theories are also connected to specific movements and actions and to the major transformations that are occurring in our schools and communities.

First Principles

But how are these theoretical, historical, political, and empirical resources to be mobilized? There are some key principles that are significant in this regard. Over the past four decades, I and many others have argued that education must be seen as a political act. As I stated earlier in this article, we need to think *relationally*. That is, understanding education requires that we situate it back both into the unequal relations of power in the larger society and into the realities of dominance and subordination—and the conflicts—that are generated by these relations. Take the issues surrounding the curriculum, for example. Rather than simply asking whether students have mastered a particular subject matter and have done well on our all-too-common tests, we should ask a different set of questions: Whose knowledge is this? How did it become “official”? In our increasingly globalized world, what is the relationship between this knowledge and the ways in which it is taught and evaluated, and who has cultural, social, and economic capital in this society and others? Who benefits from these definitions of legitimate knowledge and from the ways schooling and this society are organized, and who does not? How do what are usually seen as “reforms” actually work? What can we do as critical educators, researchers, and activists to change existing educational and social inequalities and to create curricula and teaching that are more socially just (Apple, 1995, 1996, 2000; Apple et al., 2003; Apple & Beane, 2007; Au, 2009; Buras, 2008; Gutstein, 2006; Lipman, 2004; North, 2009; Valenzuela, 2005)?

As I also stated, answering these questions requires that we engage in the process of *repositioning*. That is, we need to see the world through the eyes of the dispossessed and act against the ideological and institutional processes and forms that reproduce oppressive conditions. Engagement with this process has led to a fundamental restructuring of what the roles of research, researcher, teacher, and teacher educator are (Apple et al., 2009; Smith 1999; Weis & Fine, 2004). This role has been defined in many ways, but perhaps the best descriptions center on what the Italian political activist and theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971) called the *organic intellectual* and the cultural and political historian Russell Jacoby (2000) termed the *public intellectual* (see also Burawoy, 2005).

The restructured role of the researcher and teacher educator—one who sees her or his task as thinking as rigorously and critically as possible about the relations between

the policies and practices that are taken for granted in education and the larger sets of dominant national and international economic, political, and cultural relations, and then connects this to action with and by social movements—is crucial to the task of a more invigorated and critical teacher education. In order to understand this more fully, I need to say more about the specific tasks of the critical scholar/activist in education. Although some of these arguments are developed in more detail elsewhere (Apple, 2010a; Apple et al., 2009), detailing the complexities of this role will enable us to see more clearly what we need to do in the context of growing global inequalities and can push us toward an enlarged sense of our intellectual and political responsibilities as teacher educators.

The Tasks of the Critical Scholar/Activist in Education

In general, there are nine tasks in which critical analysis (and the critical analyst) in education and teacher education must engage.

1. It must “bear witness to negativity.”⁵ That is, one of its primary functions is to illuminate the ways in which educational policy and practice are connected to the relations of exploitation and domination—and to struggles against such relations—in the larger society.⁶ For all educators and especially the educators of our current and future teachers, this requires a firmer foundation in global realities, in the ways in which our actions are affected by and strongly affect other nations and regions, and in the debts we owe.

2. In engaging in such critical analyses, it also must point to contradictions and to spaces of possible action. Thus, its aim is to examine critically current realities with a conceptual/political framework that emphasizes the spaces in which more progressive and counterhegemonic actions can, or do, go on. This is an absolutely crucial step, since otherwise our research can simply lead to cynicism or despair. In this regard, as we document the dangers of the powerful attacks on critically democratic educational policies and practices in schools and in teacher education programs, we also should do so with an eye to where we can make gains at the same time (see, e.g., Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009; Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008; McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner, 2009).

3. At times, this also requires a broadening of what counts as “research.” Here I mean acting as critical “secretaries” to those groups of people, social movements, and teacher educators who are now engaged in challenging existing relations of unequal power or in what elsewhere has been called *nonreformist reforms*, a term that has a long history in critical sociology and critical educational studies (Apple, 1995) and one that might also productively find its way into the thoughtful discussions in teacher education. This is exactly the task that was taken on in the thick descriptions of critically

democratic school practices in *Democratic Schools* (Apple & Beane, 2007) and in the critically supportive descriptions of the transformative reforms such as the Citizen School and participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Apple et al., 2003; Gandin 2006). Thus, we need to redouble our efforts at compelling descriptions of existing critically democratic teacher education programs and of their effects in creating deeply committed and successful teachers of *all* students (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; McDonald, 2005; Zeichner, 2009).

4. When the noted Italian political theorist and activist Antonio Gramsci (1971) argued that one of the tasks of a truly counterhegemonic education was not to throw out “elite knowledge” but to reconstruct its form and content so that it served genuinely progressive social needs, he provided a key to another role that “organic” and “public” intellectuals might play. Thus, we should not be engaged in a process of what might be called *intellectual suicide*. That is, there are serious intellectual (and pedagogic) skills in dealing with the histories and debates surrounding the epistemological, political, and educational issues involved in justifying what counts as important knowledge and what counts as an effective and socially just education in general and in teacher education programs in particular to prepare teachers to engage in such an education. These are not simple and inconsequential issues, and the practical and intellectual/political skills of dealing with them have been well developed. However, they can atrophy if they are not used. We can give back these skills by employing them to assist communities in thinking about this, learning from them, and engaging in the mutually pedagogic dialogues that enable decisions to be made in terms of both the short-term and long-term interests of dispossessed peoples (Borg & Mayo, 2007; Burawoy, 2005; Freire, 1970).

5. In the process, critical work has the task of keeping traditions of radical and progressive work alive. In the face of organized attacks on the “collective memories” of difference and critical social movements, attacks that make it increasingly difficult to retain academic and social legitimacy for multiple critical approaches that have proved so valuable in countering dominant narratives and relations, it is absolutely crucial that these traditions be kept alive, renewed, and when necessary criticized for their conceptual, empirical, historical, and political silences or limitations. This involves being cautious of reductionism and essentialism and asks us to pay attention to what, following Fraser (1997), I have called both the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition (see also Anyon et al., 2009). This includes not only keeping theoretical, empirical, historical, and political traditions alive but, very importantly, extending and (supportively) criticizing them. And it also involves keeping alive the dreams, utopian visions, and nonreformist reforms that are so much a part of these critical traditions in education and in teacher education (Apple, 1995; Jacoby, 2005; Teitelbaum, 1993).

6. Keeping such traditions alive and also supportively criticizing them when they are not adequate to deal with current realities cannot be done unless we ask, “For whom are we keeping them alive?” and “How and in what form are they to be made available?” All of the things I have mentioned above in this taxonomy of tasks require the relearning or development and use of varied or new skills of working at many levels with multiple groups. Thus, journalistic and media skills, academic and popular skills, and the ability to speak to very different audiences are increasingly crucial (Apple, 2006). The popularity of neoliberal and neoconservative criticisms of teacher education programs and of schools of education themselves and the Right’s ability to circulate these criticisms widely point to the importance of our finding ways of interrupting these arguments and of showing their weaknesses. This requires us to learn how to speak in different registers and to say important things in ways that do not require that the audience or reader do all of the work. Of crucial import right now is the ability to expand the spaces of articulate uses of the media so that different ideas about the power of critically democratic teacher education programs circulate widely (e.g., Boler, 2008).

7. Critical educators must also *act* in concert with the progressive social movements their work supports or in movements against the rightist assumptions and policies they critically analyze. This is another reason that scholarship in critical education implies becoming an “organic” or “public” intellectual. One must participate in and give one’s expertise to movements engaged in actions to transform both a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition. It also implies learning from these social movements (Anyon, 2005) and listening carefully to the needs and accumulated wisdom of diasporic people. This means that the role of the “unattached intelligentsia” (Mannheim, 1936), someone who “lives on the balcony” (Bakhtin, 1968), is not an appropriate model. As Bourdieu (2003) reminds us, for example, our intellectual efforts are crucial, but they “cannot stand aside, neutral and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of the world is at stake” (p. 11).

8. Building on the points made in the previous paragraph, the critical scholar/activist in teacher education and in other areas of education has another role to play. She or he needs to act as a deeply committed mentor, as someone who demonstrates through her or his life what it means to be *both* an excellent researcher and teacher and a committed member of a society that is scarred by persistent inequalities. She or he needs to show how one can blend these two roles together in ways that may be tense but still embody the dual commitments to exceptional and socially committed research and participating in movements whose aim is interrupting dominance. It should go without saying that she or he needs to embody all of these commitments in her or his teaching. If we do not embody these global understandings and social/educational commitments in our own classes, how can we

expect that our students—our current and future teachers—will do this in their own settings (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; Zeichner, 2009)?

9. Finally, participation also means using the privilege one has as a scholar/teacher/activist. That is, each of us needs to make use of our privilege to open the spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the “professional” sites to which, being in a privileged position, we have access. This can be seen, for example, in the history of the activist-in-residence program at the University of Wisconsin Havens Center for Social Structure and Social Change, where committed activists in various areas (the environment, indigenous rights, housing, labor, racial disparities, education, and so on) were brought in to teach and to connect our academic work with organized action against dominant relations. Or it can be seen in a number of women’s studies programs and indigenous, aboriginal, and first nation studies programs that historically have involved activists in these communities as active participants in the governance and educational programs of these areas at universities. What roles might community activists from diasporic and global rights groups play in our teacher education programs and in challenging the ways in which we think about and interact with their children, their schools, and their communities?

The list is not meant to be a final one. But it suggests a range of responsibilities, many of which are currently being taken very seriously in some of our teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Zeichner, 2009). Of course, no one person can do all of these things simultaneously. These are *collective* responsibilities, ones that demand a cooperative response. But these varied tasks should constantly be on the minds of all of us who are dedicated to building teacher education programs that deal powerfully with the global realities our current and future teachers will increasingly face.

Some Final Thoughts

In taking these tasks as seriously as they deserve, we can be grounded in something that Ricardo Rosa (2008) has articulated: “For new structures to come into being and new political engagements to be nurtured, it is necessary that we have a language to bring it into existence—a lexicon of change, so to speak” (p. 3). One of these languages of course is the language of globalization. But this language can both open and close at the same time. It can provide us with powerful resources of understanding and of possible educational actions, but only if it is connected to a rich and detailed sensitivity to complexity, to politics, to cultural struggles both here and abroad, to an enhanced sense of agency and respect for those whom this society all too often sees as “the other,” and finally to a recognition of the debts we must repay to those who labor so hard for our benefit.

The language of globalization speaks to the constant struggles both to understand more fully the global and local forces of dominance and to keep them from preventing or destroying an education worthy of its name. These struggles for what I have elsewhere called *thick democracy* occur both inside and outside of schools, colleges, and universities (Apple, 2006). They signify the continuation of what Raymond Williams (1961) so felicitously called “the long revolution,” the ongoing movements in so many nations to create a vision of critical democracy and critical teaching that responds to the best in us.

A key here is what I mentioned in my taxonomy of tasks in this article: *nonreformist reforms*. Reforms such as building and defending schools and teacher education programs that are grounded in more global realities, that can be jointly controlled by all of the people involved, and that may partly interrupt dominance are crucial. But of the many reforms that are needed, we should engage in those that we predict will more clearly lead to expanding the space of further interruptions. Reforming teacher education programs and institutions must be done with an eye toward their role in expanding the space of even more critically democratic reforms (Zeichner, 2009).

The ongoing relations among education and dominance/subordination and the struggles against these relations are exactly that, the subject of struggles. The constant attempts by real people in real movements in real economic, political, and ideological conditions to challenge their circumstances—and the ensuing actions by dominant groups to regain their hegemonic leadership and their control of this terrain—make any statement about a final conclusion meaningless. What we can do is to help ensure that these movements and counterhegemonic activities in teacher education and in the schools and communities such programs ultimately serve are made public and that we honestly ask ourselves what our roles are in supporting the struggles toward the long revolution.

What I personally can hope for is that the critical theoretical, educational, and political resources I have suggested here can help us “bear witness”; illuminate spaces for critical work; keep alive the multiple critical traditions in teacher education and the larger field of education; and act as secretaries for the tendencies, movements, and people who demand something better for themselves, their children, their schools, and their teachers in a world filled with both pain and possibility. The first step is having a firmer understanding of globalization and its effects. But let us then take the many steps that follow.

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Notes

1. A shorter version of the arguments advanced in this article can be found in Apple (2010a).
2. Such relational understanding is also based in a recognition of the importance of Bourdieu's (1999) comment that "intellectual life, like all other social spaces, is a home of nationalism and imperialism" (p. 220).
3. Thus, here the very *lack* of Foucault's panopticon (Foucault, 1977) constitutes a form of control. This is a political and conceptual intervention that is not overtly made by Davis, but it is a significant one. I hope that it causes some of those within the postmodern educational research community within teacher education and the general research community who are uncritically wedded to Foucault as a theorist of new forms of control to raise questions about whether the *absence of knowledge* and the absence of the panopticon may be equally as important when we are talking about massive structural global inequalities such as those being discussed here.
4. The concept of "skill" is not neutral. It is an ideological and political concept. For example, the work that women and minoritized people have historically done has had a much harder time being labeled as *skilled* labor.
5. I am aware that the idea of "bearing witness" has religious connotations, ones that are powerful in the West, but may be seen as a form of religious imperialism in other religious traditions. I still prefer to use it because of its powerful resonances with ethical discourses. But I welcome suggestions from, say, Muslim critical educators and researchers for alternative concepts that can call forth similar responses. I want to thank Amy Stambach for this point.
6. Here, *exploitation* and *domination* are technical not rhetorical terms. As I noted, the first refers to economic relations, the structures of inequality, the control of labor, and the distribution of resources in a society. The second refers to the processes of representation and respect and to the ways in which people have identities imposed on them. These are analytic categories, of course, and are ideal types. Most oppressive conditions are partly a combination of the two. These map on to what Fraser (1997) calls the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition.

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