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To Bravely Speak:  
An Essay Review of Jean Anyon's *Marx and Education*

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"I said, now watch what you say  
Or they'll be calling you a radical,  
Liberal, fanatical, criminal."  
~Supertramp, *The logical song*

In *Marx and Education*, Jean Anyon uses the trajectory of her scholarship from the 1970s to the present, as well as noted contemporaries, as a means of demonstrating the evolving but continuing importance of Marxist thought for the

relationship among school failure, poverty, and the political economy. The book is written with her usual talent for conveying complex ideas in a language that is accessible to a wider audience than that of Marxist academics. While written primarily

as an introductory text appropriate for advanced undergraduate students, teachers, and graduate students, it also speaks to educational, economics, sociological, and other scholars; those who tend to ignore Marx or, if they cite Marx, may reconsider some of their interpretations of his theory after reading *Marx and Education*. The book makes a compelling argument for reading and citing Marxist scholarship, exposing students to Marxist thought, and returning to the original writings of Marx as a way to clear up confusion, while simultaneously modifying Marxist theory given new evidence and developments in society and capitalism. Having spent her career rowing “against the current of educational research, with the ideas of Karl Marx as a guide and inspiration” (p. 1), Anyon has passed the torch, or oar if you don’t like mixed metaphors. This is an important book that should be read by scholars, teachers, and students.

The book consists of an introduction and four chapters. This essay review will present each of these parts of the book before critically assessing the book and positioning it in the related literature and adding my own two cents on the significance of the conversation that Anyon has invited us to participate in. This essay review is meant to serve both as a supportive review of *Marx and Education* as well as a modest companion to it, to assist readers discovering Marx for the first time, or discovering his work anew, in identifying the broader literature on Marxism and Education.



Jean Anyon is Professor of Social and Educational Policy in the Urban Education Doctoral Program at the City University of New York. She is the author of *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and A New Social Movement* and *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Education*. Her articles on social class, race, and schools have been reprinted in 45 edited collections, and translated into several languages.

## Presenting the Chapters

### Introduction

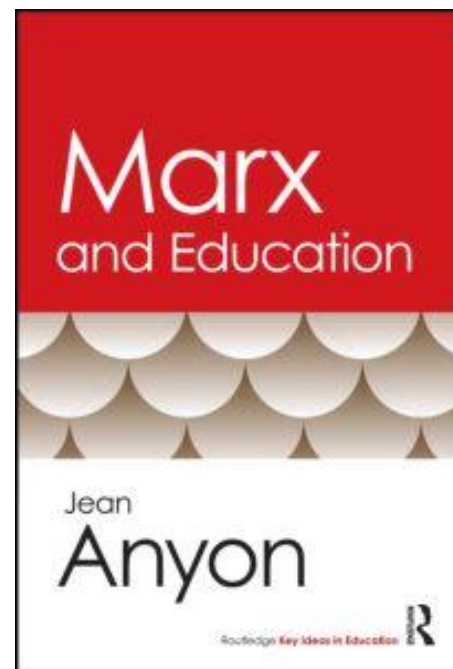
The introductory chapter describes motivations for writing of the book and the form it takes. The primary motivations described are, given the relative and increasing absence of discussions of Marx in the educational literature, to introduce

students, teachers, and scholars to the significance of Marxism for any considerations of the social context of education, to call for a rediscovery of Marxist scholarship, and to urge scholars who do draw upon Marxism to return to the original works by Marx, as a way to clarify misconceptions about his theory in subsequent scholarship, before modifying Marxism, avoiding what Anyon views as “outdated” (p. 14), for the contemporary context of society and capitalism. She argues that Marxist analysis, always important, is needed in this period of late capitalism and economic crisis more than ever if we are to understand why capitalist crisis happens and what might be done about it.

The introduction also presents several basic Marxist and neo-Marxist concepts as background knowledge necessary to the reading of the chapters that follow. Among concepts that are named in this chapter are the non-neutrality of schools, class reproduction, social transformation, capitalism, inequality, social class, class conflict, contradiction, revolutionary transformation, consciousness, agency, communism, socialism, profit, the political economy, commodity, hegemony, good sense, resistance, accumulation by dispossession, critical pedagogy, workers as commodities, production, means of production, the correspondence principal, structure, agency, primitive accumulation, the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, and the petite bourgeoisie, the middle class, the Marxist treatment of race and gender, ideology, Marx’s understanding of culture as

ideology, the ruling class, and the “vanguard of the revolution” (Anyon, 2011, p. 16).

Anyon defines capitalism, according to Marx, as “an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production” where owners “obtain the



profits from sales” (p. 7). She defines the socialist or communist system as Marx imagined it as one “in which everyone contributes to the production of economic goods according to their ability, and is provided profits and goods according to what each person needs” (p. 7) and in which, quoting Marx, “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (p. 9). Social class is defined as “a person’s or group’s relation to the means of production” (p. 11).

## Chapter One: Neo-Marxism in Education, 1970s and 1980s

Anyon (2011) positions the early neo-Marxist period beginning in the early 1970s in the context of the social activism of the 1960s, with academics such as herself who emerged from that activism searching for alternatives to meritocracy explanations for school failure and inequality. She marks the beginning of this period with the publication of *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. Reviewed in the *New York Times* and widely read this book introduced Marxist analysis of schools to the educational community. Bowles and Gintis argued that the purpose and role of schools was not to reward merit in later occupations, but rather, was to reproduce and justify inherited class position. Anyon describes the theory of reproduction found in *Schooling in Capitalist America* as an argument that, “the experiences of students, and the skills they develop in school in different social class contexts (e.g., working class or wealthy communities), exhibited striking correspondences to the experiences and skills that would characterize their likely occupational positions later” (p. 20).

The early period of Anyon’s work, described in this chapter, was focused on testing the correspondence principle by means of qualitative observation and analysis. She conducted research in five elementary schools with differing social class characteristics. The work tasks assigned to students and the conceptions of knowledge employed by the schools did

differ by social class. Moreover, these differences, she found, did correspond to “the likely future job requirements of the children in each school” (Anyon, 2011, p. 23). The children were being socialized, by means of both the explicit and hidden curriculum, and pedagogy utilized, to their inherited location in the class hierarchy.

Anyon credits Michael Apple, during this period, with introducing American educators to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Paul Willis, and Michael Young. His influence, she argues, opened the door for other scholars who would expand the conversation to include the work of authors such as Louis Althusser, Theodor Adorno, Stuart Hall, Jurgen Habermas, and Paulo Freire. She describes this emerging movement as the development of critical pedagogy.

## Chapter Two: Neo-Marxism in Education, 1990 – 2005

Anyon (2011) describes this second period in Marxist educational scholarship as one in which the focus on class was qualified by the consideration of race and gender, as independent and interacting forms of oppression, given the growing contribution of Latino, Black and feminist scholars. Among scholars writing in this area at the time were Cameron McCarthy, Pauline Lipman, and Bill Watkins. This movement in Marxist thought, and the criticism of it, contributed to the emergence of Critical Race Theory and neo-Marxist feminist pedagogy. This period also included greater consideration of Freire’s notion of critical pedagogy, given in large part to the

scholarship of Carlos Torres, Antonia Darder, Gustavo Fischman, and Rudolfo Torres. In the later part of this period Apple foresaw the rightest restoration and then, as his predictions sadly came to pass, documented the damage done to educational curriculum and pedagogy.

Anyon's own work began to focus on developing an analytical stance regarding radical political economy, that views educational failure as primarily resulting from the macroeconomy. She published *Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform* in 1997, the culmination of extensive research in schools in Newark, New Jersey. Examining the economic development, decline, and broader history of the city, she concluded that fixing the educational system would require simultaneously fixing the problems in the city. As she explains, quoting herself from the book, "attempting to fix an inner city school without fixing the neighborhood it is in is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door" (Anyon, 2011, p. 50). Fixing these interrelated and complex problems would require, she concluded, a broad movement for social, economic, and educational justice. With the publication of *Radical Possibilities* in 2005, Anyon continued the train of thought begun in *Ghetto Schooling*, describing in detail social policies that perpetuate concentrated poverty and proposing strategies that can be used to build the social movement that is needed. Classroom pedagogy and curriculum, in the traditions of critical pedagogy and progressive education, were described that could contribute to the development of the

skills and trust needed to build such a movement.

### Chapter Three: Current Issues – Economic Problems, Educational Policies

In this chapter Anyon (2011) examines the educational "reforms" being pushed by the Bush and Obama Administrations with the support of Congress—The passage of No Child Left Behind during the Bush administration, the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (though this name has been abandoned to create the illusion of difference) and Race to the Top during the Obama administration—in the context of the economic crisis and extreme inequality currently existing. Applying Marxist analysis to the assumptions underlying these educational approaches allegedly designed to improve academic outcomes and therefore job prospects for low-income students, she reveals their fundamental flaws. She provides convincing evidence that increased educational attainment does not guarantee gainful employment. This is the case, of course, because educational attainment does not create middle-class jobs in the capitalist economy. As she writes:

... education did not create the problem of wide-spread poverty and low-wage work, and education will not solve the problem. Race to the Top will not raise wages for the millions who work at poverty jobs. Only employers and governments can raise wages. The situation demands, it seems to me, real job creation – in addition to better and more education. (p. 75)



I would restate the important insights in this chapter as follows: The *Field of Dreams* (Robinson, 1989) notion of education as a means for correcting the poverty produced by late capitalism, therefore, either evidences delusional thinking akin to the concept of rationalization described by Freire (1970/2006) or else represents deliberate obfuscation by those who propagate it.

#### Chapter Four: Extending Marxist Theory and Practice

The final chapter in Anyon's *Marx and Education* proposes changes to Marxist theory in response to recent developments in the capitalist system. The vastly internationalized market makes workers in the United States less necessary, in either the production or consumption process, so far as the ability of transnational corporations to profit is concerned. Drawing on David Harvey's notion of accumulation by dispossession, she argues that the economy no longer creates profit primarily by the production and sale of products and services but rather does so primarily through financial speculation. A second part of this new process of creating profit involves privatizing public property. The resulting financialized economy accelerates the distribution of income upwards, reduces infrastructure and public services investment, and destabilizes the economy. This transformation of the means of production was facilitated by the neoliberal economic philosophy, accepted by both major political parties in the United States.

Given these changes in the capitalist system, Anyon (2011) argues that the Marxist focus on the workplace, the point of production, as the achilles heel (my words not those of Marx or Anyon) of capitalism and the place where workers could collectively stop the capitalist system, should be replaced with an understanding that resistance to capitalism must be organized society-wide. In response to these changes, she also proposes that Marxist practice in the classroom move beyond critical pedagogy, which she understands as a means for political consciousness raising, to one that brings classroom activities in closer contact with the political realm. That is to say that schools, and students, must take an active role in the broader struggles for social justice. This is necessary, she argues, because...

developing critical consciousness in people through information, readings, and discussion does not, by itself, induce them to participate in transgressive politics – although it provides a crucial base of understanding. To activate people to create or join public contention, it is important to actually involve them in protest activity of some kind. (p. 99)

Drawing on the work of sociologists who study the civil rights movement, she argues that this is the case in part because engagement in activism creates new political identities, rather than the other way around. Finally, she cites research that shows that low-income students who engage in community-based activism tend to become

more engaged academically, choose positive community connections over gang affiliation, with resulting improvements in achievement.

### Critically Assessing *Marx and Education*

#### The Challenge of Writing for Multiple Audiences

Given that the Marxist literature can be difficult initially to digest, is full of authors taking contradictory positions on a multitude of questions, tends to be written in high-level academic language, and given that much of Marx's own writing was more a collection of evolving thoughts than organized thesis (Sharp, 1980; Allman, 2001), it is quite a challenge to strike the right balance among depth, breadth, introductory explanation, common language usage, and academic language, when writing for multiple audiences. For the most part Anyon (2011) succeeds in finding the right balance. More explanation or definition of terms and concepts named would have helped students and those new to Marxist thought. At the same time too much attention to such matters might have read mundane for the Marxist scholars to whom the book is also addressed. A longer book, likewise, may have overwhelmed undergraduates and busy teachers as an introductory text.

The difficulty of finding the perfect balance and the trade-offs that inevitably result are evident throughout the book. Perhaps a glossary of terms at the end of the book would have improved this balance

somewhat (one example of such a glossary can be found at <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/>). Likewise, the inclusion of more competing books on the relevance of Marxist thought to education either in the references or in a list at the end of the book for suggested reading would have aided emerging Marxist educational scholars on their journey; a number of these can be found in the list of references of this review essay. I do not believe that abandoning one of her multiple audiences in order to side step this difficult balancing act would have been the correct decision, however. One of the strengths of the book is that it can bring undergraduate students, graduate students, teachers, and academics together in the sharing of a common text regarding Marx and education, thereby facilitating praxis.

#### Missing Marxist Concepts

Readers who are familiar with the work of Marx and the scholarship around his work will immediately notice that many Marxist concepts are not explored in depth or are missing from the book. This is inevitable for a book that is, at least in part, an introductory text and Anyon should not be faulted for this in general. Some of the Marxist and neo-Marxist concepts that are missing, present but not named, or that have been explored in greater detail in competing books on Marxism and education include species-being (Brosio, 1994; Pines, 1993; Price, 1986; Martin, 2002; Cole, 2008; Rikowski, 2002; Small, 2005; McLaren, 2001), base and superstructure (Brosio, 1994; Pines, 1993; Strike, 1989; Sarup, 1978; Price, 1986; Martin, 2002; Nyberg,

1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005), historic materialism (Brosio, 1994; Pines, 1993; Sharp, 1980; Strike, 1989; Price, 1986; Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Hook, 1955; McLaren, 2001), mode/means of production (Sharp, 1980; Pines, 1993; Strike, 1989; Price, 1986; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Sarup, 1978; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Harris, 1982), social formation (Sharp, 1980; Pines, 1993; Harris, 1982); solidarity (Hill, McLaren, Cole, & Rikowski, 2002; Small, 2005; Mandel, 1981/1991); Epoch (Sharp, 1980; Allman, 2001; Strike, 1989; Morgan, 2003; Pines, 1993; Small, 2005), relative autonomy (Sharp, 1980; Strike, 1989; Cole, 2008; Apple & Whitty 2002; Small, 2005; Sarup, 1978), ruling elite/ruling class (Sharp, 1980; Torres, 1999; Price, 1986; Pines, 1993; Brosio, 1994; Nyberg, 1965; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005), false consciousness (Sharp, 1980; Torres, 1999; Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Harris, 1979, 1982; Pines, 1993; Sarup, 1978), dialectics (Strike, 1989; Price, 1986; Martin, 2002; Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Brosio, 1994; Small, 2005; Pines, 1993; Harris, 1979, 1982; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; McLaren, 2001; Allman, 2001; Sarup, 1978), praxis/revolutionary praxis (Sharp, 1980; Torres, 1999; Price, 1986; Brosio, 1994; Pines, 1993; Nyberg, 1965; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Allman, 2001; Sarup, 1978), fetishism (Small, 2005; Hook, 1955; Pines, 1993), alienation (Strike, 1989; Price, 1986; Nyberg, 1965; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Pines, 1993; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Sarup, 1978; Harris, 1982), revolution (Price, 1986; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003;

Small, 2005; Hill, et al., 2002; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Allman, 2001; Pines, 1993; Sarup, 1978; Harris, 1982), and empirical observation/scientific socialism (Price, 1986; Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Hook, 1955; Harris, 1979; Allman, 2001; Pines, 1993).

#### On Resistance, Agency, and Reproduction

Anyon (2011) gives little attention to the debates regarding resistance and agency in critical educational scholarship, and less still to the work of Paul Willis. She also says little about the criticism of Bowles and Gintis and the ways that Willis has frequently been described as a sort of antidote to their alleged shortcomings (McGrew, 2008; 2011). Given that the book, and her early career, are so supportive of the theory of Bowles and Gintis, it seems important to elaborate some at this juncture.

Bowles and Gintis, accused of proposing an over-determined notion of education in the superstructure corresponding to the base of capitalist reproduction (see Brosio, 1994; McGrew 2008, 2011), were receiving the same overstated criticisms that have been directed at the work of Marx himself; the notion of correspondence related to capitalist school is found in the work of Marx (Small, 2005). While Apple is correct that the cultural sphere is not reducible to the economic sphere (Brosio, 1994), and while some followers of Marx may have taken positions that were reductive (Sharp, 1980; Strike, 1989; Morgan, 2003), there is ample evidence that Marx and Engels had more sophisticated notions that avoided reductionism and accounted for agency



(Brosio, 1994; Cole, 2008; Price, 1986; Martin, 2002; Hill et al., 2002; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Allman, 2001). Given that advocating for resistance became closely identified with the overstated criticisms of Bowles and Gintis (McGrew 2008; 2011), and given that Anyon's work has both supported the correspondence principle while adopting a notion of resistance, more exploration of these conflicts in the literature, and clarification of her position on them, would have been welcomed.

### Why Marxism Is Ignored in the United States

Anyon begins and ends *Marx and Education* by calling for renewed interest in Marxism. In explaining the reasons that Marx has "fallen out of favor among scholars" (p. 16), Anyon presents reasons consistent with those identified by other Marxist scholars, including the influence of postmodernism and the fall of the former Soviet Union (p. 16; Kincheloe, 1994; Allman, 2001; McLaren, 2008; Rikowski, 2002a; McLaren, 2008). There are, I would argue, at least four additional reasons for the conspicuous absence of Marxism from contemporary discussions, particularly in the educational scholarship in the United States, that need mentioning here: (1) Rightist attacks on Left scholarship and academics (Price, 1986; Morgan, 2003; Rikowski, 2002a), (2) the rejection of the concepts of the ruling-class and ruling-elite as conspiratorial, (3) stereotyped attacks on Bowles and Gintis, and Marx, for alleged reductionism, fatalism, and for having ignored human

agency, and (4) fear among essentially Marxist scholars to align themselves with Marxism or identify themselves as Marxist, given the rampant attacks on these perspectives and their subsequent decline in scholarship (Sharp, 1980; Torres, 1999; Strike, 1989; Rikowski, 2002a), lest they be attacked in the same manner as have Marx, Domhoff (2009), or Bowles and Gintis. In short, Marxism is in decline not only because many scholars, students, and teachers are unfamiliar with the literature and its relevance to contemporary social and economic problems, but also because scholars who are familiar with it choose not to discuss Marx, and if they describe what are in large part Marxist concepts or use essentially Marxist analysis, identify with a proxy theory, such as critical theory (Torres, 1999).

### On Marxism and Revolution

Anyon argues in *Marx and Education* that "Much in Marx is outdated" and that revolution "itself appears an old fashioned concept" (p 18). While she describes changes in capitalist production and new theories that help to address them, she does not return to or elaborate on the suggestion that revolution is no longer a necessary concept for Marxism. Perhaps at issue here is the definition of revolution and in particular whether what is described as revolution requires the use of force (Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008). We should be very careful of the sort of sectarian dogmatism that quickly casts off those who may differ on specific concepts though holding to essentially Marxist analysis and political

commitments. Nonetheless, in this instance, I side with numerous Marxist scholars who argue that the concept of revolution, meaning the need for the radical transformation of society and economy away from capitalism and towards socialism, is central to any theory or political movement that could reasonably be considered Marxist (Brosio, 1994; Sharp, 1980; Price, 1986; Nyberg, 1965; Cole, 2008; Morgan, 2003; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002; Allman, 2001). As Marx and Engels wrote in *The German Ideology*, “revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew” (Price, 1986, p. 7).

#### Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

As discussed previously, Anyon calls for a modified form of critical pedagogy that goes beyond mere consciousness raising to encouraging students to engage in activism. While her arguments for the need of such activism are, in my view, quite sound, and the examples of efforts to blend activism with critical classroom practices quite powerful (see also Tewksbury and Sher, 1998), I would differ with the suggestion that critical pedagogy, so long as it is grounded in the work of Freire, is focused on mere consciousness raising. This is the case because of the centrality of praxis, what Marx called revolutionary praxis, in Freire’s scholarship (1970/2006). The need for a dialectical feedback loop between action and

theory as described by Freire, the distinction between a coup and a revolution (Freire, 1970/2006; Strike, 1989; Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005), the dilemma of creating a socialist consciousness given the ideological and material influence of the existing society (Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979), and the seeming contradiction of schools being part of a revolutionary process even as they are constrained in the superstructure of capitalism (Strike, 1989) are all aspects of Freire’s work that draw heavily on Marx. Castles & Wüstenberg (1979) capture these tensions well:

To put the problem in a nutshell: to build socialism you need people who possess socialist consciousness and culture, but such people can only be produced by socialist society itself. Socialism has to be built with the ‘men and women who grew up under capitalism, were depraved and corrupted by capitalism, but steeled for struggle by capitalism’ [quoting Lenin]. The resolution of this dilemma has been an important theme of socialist theory. It is one reason why Marxists have never envisaged a direct transition from capitalism to communism, but have always seen the need for an intermediary state... (p. 5)

The heart of critical pedagogy as emerging from Freire, though also differing from Marx in important ways that I will not discuss at this time (see Small, 2005), has always been the resolution of this dilemma, with the raising of consciousness needed not only in order to engage in activism at a later

date, but with action influencing developing consciousness as well. This is the case because, as Marx wrote, the point is to change the world, not just interpret it (Price, 1986, p. 21), because “Knowledge by participation in the world of history and society is a distinctive quality of Marx’s epistemology. It opposes those empirical and theoretical programs that eliminate from their agenda those human meanings that can only be grasped existentially, by living them” (Nyberg, 1965, p. 287), and because Freire, in part following Marx, understood that, as Marx said and as Anyon (2011) has argued, people create themselves via action (Strike, 1989, p. 90).

#### Marx on Education

Despite the book under review being titled *Marx and Education*, Anyon has not written a book that is substantially about what Marx and Marxist scholars have written on education. Rather, she has written a book of Marxist inspiration, drawing attention to how educational theory and activism can be improved by, and in fact need, Marxist analysis of the economy, society, and education. Though I do not fault her for taking this approach in the book, I want to leave the interested reader with some brief discussion, and therefore starting point for future exploration, of what Marx had to say about education. Marx wrote relatively little about education (Small, 2005; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Price, 1986). Marxist scholars differ as to the reasons for this relative lack of attention to education (Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Sharp, 1980; Strike, 1989; Price, 1986; Cole, 2008) and

on whether the educational ideas that he did express were meant as descriptions of education in the future socialist society or in the present (Price, 1986; Morgan, 2003; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979; Small, 2005).

Regarding the reasons for the relative lack of attention paid to education by Marx, Castles & Wüstenberg (1979) argue that this is the case because “...Marx and Engels never dealt with education in isolation from other economic, social and political phenomena. They regarded education not as something standing above social reality, but as a living part of the totality of social structure, with a dialectical relationship to the mode of production and distribution of material products, as well as to social consciousness.” (p. 32) A similar argument is made by Price (1986):

Efforts to construct a ‘marxist analysis of education’ centered on schools and schooling is mistaken. There may be a ‘marxist theory of schooling’ which sets the school within the wider society, or looks at it with the concepts of dialiectics in mind. But this will still fail to understand the central problem of education, which surely is where human beings learn the lessons which determine their being and their becoming. Clearly, for most of us this is located outside the school... (p. 279)

Strike (1989) likewise argues, citing Bowles and Gintis, that it is work and not school that is the primary educational institution under capitalism (see also Cole, 2008).

Other Marxist Scholars, however, describe the relative lack of attention paid by Marx to education as stemming from his fear that schooling under capitalism—and perhaps by extension any educational proposals he might make being himself subsumed in capitalist society—would tend to bolster the capitalist system. Small (2005), for example, discusses Marx's fear of class bias in education under capitalism and his preference, therefore, for focusing on basics (pp. 103-104) with political education to occur at work (p. 126). The fear of the tainted nature of education under capitalism may be reflected in the examples of workers self-educating, making "organic intellectuals," described by Morgan (2003, p. 13, 52) as well as the self-study university attended by Mao (p. 107). The minutes of the general council of the international meeting on August 17, 1869, would seem to support this view, referring to Marx having stated that, "Only subjects such as the physical sciences, grammar, etc., were fit matter for schools. The rules of grammar, for instance, could not differ, whether explained by a religious Tory or a freethinker. Subjects that admitted of different conclusions must be excluded and left for the adults to such teachers as Mrs. Law, who gave instruction in religion" (p. 35).

Regarding whether the educational proposals made by Marx were intended for the future socialist society or the current society on the road to socialism, Nyberg (1965) reports that Marx believed that the future society should provide children with free public education while protecting them

from factory work (see also Morgan, 2003; Small, 2005; Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979). Yet Cole (2008) reports that Marx advocated mixing labor and schooling by the age of nine to increase awareness of the exploitative nature of capitalism (p. 30). We do know that Marx advocated for *mental education, technological training, and bodily education* (Price, 1986). Discussions regarding the notion of poly-technical found in discussions of Marx's educational statements (Morgan, 2003, Small, 2005, Castles & Wüstenberg, 1979) do not resolve the debate. Addressing this tension between education under capitalism versus education under emerging socialism, Cole (2008) argues that there are two questions coming from Marx and Engels that Marxist educators must ask: (1) how and to what extent does institutionalized education reproduce capitalism, and (2) can education in capitalist society undermine capitalism (p. 30). Price (1986), drawing from Marx, identifies three educational activities: "education for socialism; education for improving worker's conditions under capitalism; and education which serves the interests of capitalism" (p. 260). There is reason to believe that Marx may have been torn in his analysis between the need for education to contribute towards the development of revolutionary socialist consciousness and the tendency of education under capitalism to correspond to its base needs. Consider, for example, these words attributed to Marx, "on the one hand a change of social circumstances was required to establish a proper system of education, on the other hand a proper system of education was required to bring about a change of

social circumstances... we must therefore commence where we were” (Cole, 2008, p. 29; Padover, 1975 , p. 32).

### Why Read and Cite Marx?

Anyon ends *Marx and Education* with the following words: “Marx has been much maligned, and is in need of proper reconsideration. My hope is that this volume will contribute to his restitution, and to his utility as a theoretical and practical tool for educators” (p. 106). While I agree that Marx should be read and cited, this does beg the question of why his work should be reconsidered. The primary answer that Anyon provides in the book is that Marxism explains certain aspects of our economy and society, in particular widening inequality, better than other perspectives and that a structural understanding of political economy is necessary if we are to understand educational failure. As she explains:

...low-achieving urban schools are not primarily a consequence of failed education policy, or urban family dynamics, as mainstream analysts and public policies typically imply. Failing public schools in cities are, rather, a logical consequence of the U.S. macroeconomy – and the federal and regional policies and practices that support it. Teachers, principals, and urban students are not the culprits – as reform policies that target increasing testing, educator quality, and the control of youth assume. Rather, an unjust economy and the policies through which it is maintained create barriers to

educational success that no teacher or principal practice, no standardized test, and no “zero tolerance” policy can surmount. (pp. 63-64)

This is the reason presented most often by other Marxist educational scholars as well (Allman, 2001; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002; McLaren, 2008; Price, 1986; Nyberg, 1965; Strike, 1989). Sharp (1980) makes a convincing argument for the unique usefulness of Marxism when writing that, “Marxism, however, is more than just another point of view. It is inspired by a critique of class societies, and a political commitment to work to transcend the deformations inherent in relations of domination and exploitation. More specifically, it offers an analysis of capitalism which systematically exposes the poverty of liberal theory and the essentially rhetorical nature of its moral ideas which purport to bind the system together and offer inspiration to political practice. Marxism is, as Gramsci described it: a philosophical praxis.” (p. 159)

I believe there are other reasons that it remains important to read, name, and cite Marx. I will mention some of them here: (1) to give credit where credit is due, (2) revolutionary praxis, (3) the need to name the socialist alternative, and (4) solidarity. The need to give credit where it is due is not simply the right thing to do, but allows for an accurate and grounded reading of the historical development of the scholarly literature. I will not elaborate more on this point at this time. The need for revolutionary praxis has been alluded to



several times in this essay review. Space does not permit a more thorough examination of the need for revolutionary change and the need for praxis as part of the revolutionary process. For interested readers who are not familiar with these concepts I would urge that they follow the references provided to begin an exploration of them. On the need to name the socialist alternative and the need for solidarity I will elaborate, as these lessons from Marxism are particularly relevant to contemporary society, educators, academics, the arguments made in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011), and to the arguments I have raised in this review.

#### *The Need to Name the Socialist Alternative*

Marx referred to the future system he envisioned as communism, in part, to differentiate his theory from the do-gooding members of the upper class known at the time as socialists (Price, 1986, p. 4). The similarity of language used by left-leaning liberals and those of socialists / communists / Marxists has continued to demand careful attention to similarities and differences that are often masked by the similar language. Strike (1989) makes this argument writing that, “The mere fact that there is a continuity of vocabulary between Marxism and ‘cultural Marxism’ does not mean that the latter shares with Marxism any of its central assumptions or that it has any of its own” (p. 156). Strike, for example, accuses Bowles and Gintis of being embracing a liberal perspective that seeks not equal outcomes but fair competition (pp. 21, 165). Price (1986) similarly argues that Bowles and

Gintis are not working from a Marxist notion of class when they advocate for liberal goals like the elimination of poverty (p. 189). I do not view the work of Bowles and Gintis as somehow outside of the Marxist fold. The general point about the cross pollination of liberal and Marxist ideals and commitments contributing to a loss of specificity is well taken, however.

Given the price that is often paid for calling oneself a socialist, Marxist, or communist (Price, 1986; Morgan, 2003; Rikowski, 2002a), and given efforts by right-wing operatives to brand anyone with any position left of the far right as a socialist—when Marxism, though most people in the United States have no idea what Marxism is about, is rendered a dirty word (Sharp, 1980)—it is not surprising that many have shied away from brashly naming their Marxist orientation. With the rejection of Marxism by liberal and reactionary scholars (Rikowski, 2002a; Strike, 1989), many critical scholars have also abandoned the Marxist program and have adopted liberal ways of “analyzing problems” (Strike, 1989, p. 139), with some critical scholars declaring that Marxism is dead (Torres, 1999 or otherwise ignoring Marx (McLaren, 2001).

Michael Moore’s film *Capitalism a Love Story* (2009) illustrates this danger. Though a powerful critique of corporate power, there is little in the film to illuminate the structural conditions in late capitalism from a Marxist perspective. He shows footage of Sarah Palin and “Joe the Plumber” criticizing socialism, claiming it is not democratic, and shows others who accused President Obama

of being a socialist. He uses an interview with Senator Bernie Sanders to provide a definition of socialism as, “the function of government is to represent middle-income and working people, rather than just the wealthy and the powerful.” So he embraces to some extent socialism over capitalism, but fails to explain adequately the structural problems with capitalism, how capitalism works, and defines socialism in essentially liberal terms. He ends the film arguing that capitalism must be replaced with democracy. As the credits run the international plays in the background, as if to signal to those in the know that he’s really on the side of Marxism though he’s softened his stance for the film, or else to lightly mock the Marxist tradition. What I am describing here are more than missed opportunities to ground his analysis better theoretically and to better educate his audience. These aspects of the film are fundamentally mis-educational.

If Marxist analysis is to be of any use, then we must be specific in our observations, analysis, and advocacy. Though I am not in favor of Marxist thought police declaring which authors are or are not sufficiently Marxist, it would seem incumbent upon authors who are taking Marxist analysis in directions that are generally associated with liberal positions to articulate how and why what they are advocating is or is not consistent with Marx. More importantly, to allow ourselves to be bullied or scared into wearing liberal perspectives is to abandon the contribution that those of us advocating for essentially Marxist analysis of the economy, society, and education claim to be

supporting. If the price to be paid for bravely naming one’s Marxist orientation, calling oneself a Marxist or Socialist as well as advocating the replacement of capitalism with a planned and equitable economy, is deemed too high a price to risk, then the pretense of challenging inequality and poverty, much less advancing a Marxist perspective, should be abandoned as well. The demise of Marxism in the academy has occurred primarily because scholars have allowed it to happen. Therefore the call for a rebirth of Marxist thought, as Anyon makes in *Marx and Education*, must be a call to speak bravely as she has throughout her career.

### *Solidarity*

Revolutionary commitment is to speak bravely, even when standing alone, and despite the odds success. Solidarity, however, is to transform commitment into revolutionary potential. Marxist analysis, of the study of the world as well as activism within society, holds the potential to grow both commitment and an understanding for the need of solidarity. Though there is an ever present danger of dictating to the people that must be avoided, the educators and scholars who are likely to be reading this essay review, as well as the book it is addressing (Anyon, 2011), have a special opportunity to help start the dialectical cycle of praxis among the broader proletariat (Freire, 1970/2006). This potential can be realized, in part, by exposing students to Marxist literature, by means of a dialogical and non-impositional pedagogy, and by supporting each other in our efforts to do so.

When the high school teacher is threatened for raising questions about power and the political economy, and for encouraging her students to do the same, do we support this teacher with a revolutionary fervor or do we lament her demise from the distance of our computer screens and books? Do we satisfy our guilt by discussing her dismissal in academic prose read only by other academics or do we attempt to put our academic skills to use in consultations with popular efforts to protect democratic education? Do we stand with the oppressed “and fight at their side” (Freire, 1970/2006), or do we advance middle-class careers by pimping poor people as our niche in the academy? Do we defend colleagues who challenge homophobia, racism, classism, and sexism in the classroom? And tenure earning faculty, do you fight for the rights of non-tenure earning faculty, advocating for tenure conversions, or are you complicit in their exploitation given fear or the small perks that accrue from their low-pay and vulnerable situation? These are not rhetorical questions. They speak to the difference between solidarity and a pale word called solidarity. Without a strong and lived commitment to the principle and practice of solidarity, reading books like *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) is to engage in a form of intellectual entertainment.

## Conclusion

In *Marx and Education*, Anyon has created a very useful tool for starting conversations about Marxist scholarship and activism, among teachers, students, academics, and

other members of the community, that is accessible to a broad audience without losing specificity or overly simplifying concepts. Importantly, she has reminded us of the importance of blending critical reflection with action, that is to engage in revolutionary praxis. She has made an important contribution. We can collectively continue the process she is helping to start by reading the book, sharing it with colleagues and friends, adopting the book for common book reading projects, forming study groups that use the book as the starting point for deeper and broader study of the Marxist literature, and by assigning it in courses that we may teach. As soon as is feasible, however, the understanding of the political economy that will be gained must be put to use in efforts to address concrete problems in our schools, communities, and society.

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