

## **On Being Holier-Than-Thou: A Critique of Curry Malott’s “Pseudo-Marxism and the Reformist Retreat from Revolution”**

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“Now the problem is to find a basis of union on which all these sections who owe allegiance to one or other conception of socialism may unite. My position is that this union, or rapprochement, cannot be arrived at by discussing our differences. Let us rather find out and unite upon the things upon which we agree. Once we get together, we will find that our differences are not so insuperable as they appear whilst we are separated... As each section has complete confidence in their own doctrines, let them show their confidence by entering an organization with those who differ from them in methods, and depend upon the development of events to prove the correctness of their position.” – James Connolly (1909)

In the May 2011 edition of this journal, Curry Malott contributed an essay review of Jean Anyon’s *Marx and Education* (2011). I would summarize Malott’s critiques of her book as follows: (1) she didn’t write the book that he wanted her to write, (2) she didn’t cite the authors that he wanted her to cite, and (3) her work is anti-Marxist because her take on the literature isn’t identical to his. While his intention was to expose her book as undermining Marxist analysis even as she sought to support it, Malott’s essay is actually more successful as an example of the dangers of sectarianism and of the tendency on the Left to purge those viewed as not sufficiently conforming to orthodoxy in their positions. By examining the problems in his essay I hope to provide a cautionary tale that may encourage Malott, and others, to remember the praxis in revolution.

While some of Malott’s (2011) criticisms of *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) merit consideration, at least as drawing attention to the need for greater clarity of language and position, they tend towards gross overstatements of the significance of any errors she may have made. This overreaching seems to occur primarily because he draws conclusions as to the meaning and implications of written statements in the book that are not reasonable given what Anyon actually wrote, misrepresents the positions of various critical scholars in the effort to support his arguments, and makes arguments and reaches conclusions that are not logical or consistent. More troubling than this, however, is that Malott leaves the impression that he believes there is some sort of unified vanguard of Marxist educational scholars, consisting of himself and others who read Marx correctly, and claims the right to cast out as enemies of Marxism anyone who might deviate from their views. I will now turn to an examination of these problems.

### **Write What We Want You to Write**

As I noted in my early review of *Marx and Education* (McGrew, 2011), Anyon was tasked by the book series editor with the unusual and challenging task of describing the trajectory of her career—of primary interest to other critical scholars—while simultaneously providing a brief introduction to Marxism for a mixed audience. As she put it, she was asked to trace the “trajectory of my scholarly work over the years as an example of how Marx has been used as a guide to educational analysis” (Anyon, 2011, p. 4). Anyon has written a book that does exactly what she said it

would do. It serves to wet the appetite of readers who are new to Marxist analysis to engage in a more thorough reading of Marx. That it does not do what Malott (2011) would have done is of little importance. If her book, rather than being titled *Marx and Education*, had been titled *The Marxist Influence on the Scholarship and Career of Jean Anyon with a Brief Introduction to Several Basic Marxist Concepts*, she might not have attracted Malott's ire. By calling her book *Marx and Education* she has encroached on turf that Malott and others claim for themselves.

Because Anyon (2011) did not write the book that Malott (2011) wanted her to write, she also did not include in the book what he wanted her to include. Though Malott acknowledges that the book was not meant to be comprehensive (p. 5), he repeatedly criticizes her for not being as comprehensive as he'd like. He also ignores the stated purposes and audiences for which the book was written. For example, he states that Anyon claimed to be documenting "Marx and education" (p. 4), though she never claimed to be writing a book on what Marx wrote about education. Similarly, he complains that "the history she outlines is not the history of Marxism" (p. 4) when she was not writing a history of Marxism but rather of her own career as influenced by Marx.

Malott (2011) claims that if the "Marxist points of view" not included are considered that the whole framework of the book "quickly loses credibility" (p. 6). I find no support in his essay for this dismissal of the entire book. Instead of providing the support needed for such a bold claim, he tends to simply state what "she should have said" (p. 6) and written about (p. 9). For example, Malott complains of what he alleges to be her "uncritical use" of the term "American Dream" (p. 11) and the "missed opportunity" to discuss how "from a critical indigenous point of view, the American Dream has always been a nightmare" (p. 11). Here is the passage in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) that Malott is referring to:

My generation came of age in the rebellious 1960s, and that may be one reason that as academics many of us were attracted to a theory that challenged what we had been taught about U.S. society. Rather than focusing on meritocracy, democracy, and patriotism, as our school books had taught us, we focused on what seemed to us structural inequalities – and what we saw as systematic means by which whole groups and cultures (e.g., workers, African Americans, women) were excluded from the American Dream. (p. 19)

When we consider what Anyon actually wrote in the passage we find no evidence of an uncritical use of the term or of her having somehow endorsed the capitalist "American Dream." Though Anyon could be faulted for not including Native Americans and other groups in her list of those excluded, she should not be criticized for not providing the account that he wanted to see; of the oppression of indigenous populations being related to primitive accumulation (Malott, 2011, p. 11). That Anyon did not include in *Marx and Education* (2011) everything that she could have included—if she were writing a longer and more advanced text—or everything Malott wanted her to include is of little importance. It should be noted that Malott himself fails to mention a range of Marxist concepts, some of which are discussed by Anyon (2011).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I provide a guide organized by author to a number of Marxist concepts in McGrew, 2011.

### Cite Whom We Want You to Cite

Not only did Anyon(2011) not write the book that Malott(2011) wanted her to write, but she also, not surprisingly, failed to cite the authors whom he wanted her to cite; Malott considers the “cutting edge contemporary educational Marxists *not* mentioned in her book” (p. 2) to include Mike Cole, Dave Hill, Paula Allman,<sup>5</sup> and Glenn Rikowski (p. 8). He likewise complains that she did not cite the “critical pedagogy” authors that he wanted her to cite (p. 5; see Critical Pedagogy section below). While Malott acknowledges that Anyon cites Peter McLaren he complains that she did not spend enough time discussing his work (p. 10). In general he complains that Anyon “draws on almost exclusively American Scholars” (pp. 11, 9-11), despite her citing authors who do have an international perspective, such as Antonia Darder and Carlos Torres (Anyon, 2011, p. 3). Of course, Anyon was writing a book focused on the influence of U.S.-based Marxist scholars on her own career, credited Apple with introducing U.S. scholars to European Marxist scholarship, and, therefore, did not focus on international authors.

The authors that Malott (2011) insists Anyon (2011) should have cited were not, for the most part, publishing on educational Marxism during the first period of her career in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so we should not expect to find them remembered in the parts of her book that correspond to those decades. Peter McLaren, for example, though a prominent educational Marxist today, as recently as 1987 was highly critical of “orthodox,” “classical,” and “vulgar” Marxism (terms that he used interchangeably), for, among other alleged errors, reducing everything to production relations (pp. 301-304) and for “threatening any possible reconciliation of an orthodox Marxist theory of ideology with new post-structuralist formulations” (p. 302). Much of his criticism of Marxism in the article was from a postmodern perspective (not even a neo-Marxist perspective), leading him to state that, “my ‘culturalist’ position asserts that the manufacture of desire can exist relatively independently of the logic of the economy” (p. 303). During the earlier part of Anyon’s career, therefore, her theory was more informed by Marxism than was McLaren, who was following postmodern theory, so we should not expect her to have cited him as an influence. It was during the first period of her career that Anyon (1981) was most directly engaged with examining and testing Marxist theory. Even then, however, she was drawing upon a wider body of literature that would, according to the labels assigned by Malott, make her either neo-Marxist or not Marxist at all. So he should not, given his own charges against her work, expect her to cite orthodox<sup>6</sup> Marxists as influences during this period.

By the second period of her career Anyon was applying her theoretical perspective (which is largely Marxist but also draws upon a broader body of scholarship) to expose the structural nature of poverty and educational failure in urban settings in the United States. The approach taken in the second period of her career has continued into her recent scholarship as well. The authors that Malott cites as ideal type educational Marxists (whom I agree are important voices in Marxist scholarship and from whom I have learned a great deal) have largely been concerned with discussions related to a close (orthodox or classical) reading of Marx. Anyon’s

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted, despite Malott’s attempt to include Allman, McLaren, and Hill in a chorus that sings the same Marxist tune as he sings, that Kelsh and Hill (2006) dismiss Allman (2001) as anti-Marxist for her treatment of property, even as McLaren (2001) praises her for it.

<sup>6</sup> While the authors that Malott identifies with may prefer to think of themselves as *classical Marxists* (Kelsh & Hill, 2006; McLaren, 2001a; McLaren & Rikowski, 2000), I believe, given the concepts they advance, that they are closer to *orthodox Marxism* (see Lukács, 1968; Althusser, 1971).

work has largely been concerned with applying Marxist insights and inspiration to the qualitative empirical study of social problems. Thus their work is not the most immediately relevant to her discussion of her scholarship. Finally, it must be noted that Anyon choosing not to cite these authors does not indicate that she hasn't read them.

Anyon's (2011) alleged failure to cite the correct authors, according to Malott (2011), seems to be related to her having failed to write the book that he wanted her to write. As I noted in my review of *Marx and Education* (McGrew, 2011), the book would have been improved, in my view, if Anyon had included a list of suggested readings on and by Marx.<sup>7</sup> Given that this book was written in part as an introductory text, however, it is inevitable and appropriate that certain concepts not be addressed in the sort of detail one finds in a more focused and advanced discussion of Marx and that the number of citations included be truncated as well.

### **Conform to Our Interpretation of Marx**

In my review of *Marx and Education* (McGrew, 2011) I suggested that the book might have been improved if it had leaned a bit more towards detailed Marxist analysis without abandoning the ability to reach a mixed audience. That's an opinion. Malott (2011) seems to be arguing—as an absolute truth rather than an opinion—that any scholarship on Marxism that doesn't say the things that he wants said and doesn't cite the authors whom he wants cited is somehow counter-revolutionary. This tendency towards authoritarianism and sectarianism on the Left has historically served to undermine the global struggle for a socialist future. As such it must be opposed and rooted out. It is this tendency towards dogmatic thinking, so evident in Malott's (2011) essay, that necessitates my critique continuing beyond what I have discussed so far. I will now turn to some of his arguments as to why Anyon is allegedly an enemy of Marxism, in order to show that this sort of orthodoxy is both counterproductive and ultimately, ironically to be sure, inconsistent with Marx.

### **The Marxist Litmus Test**

Malott (2011) states that Anyon's work "is as devoid of genuine Marxist critique as those who openly denounce Marxism," (p. 2), that she is pseudo-Marxist rather than Marxist or neo-Marxist (p. 2), and that she is Weberian (what Malott means by calling her this is discussed in the Max Weber section below), reformist, and, therefore, "indirectly pro-capitalist" (p. 2). Statements such as these are frequently repeated in his essay without providing adequate support for them. When what he takes for support is provided it seems to result from misreading what Anyon wrote, from misreading the positions of other scholars, or by drawing conclusions from what she wrote that are neither logical or consistent. The few potential errors that Malott (2011) identifies in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) are not used simply to argue that those instances are inconsistent with a Marxist perspective but, rather, that the entire book is somehow anti-Marxist. Worse still, Malott (2011) argues that these potential errors render her entire career anti-Marxist.<sup>8</sup> Finally, and problematically, he continually implies that there is a unified body of Marxist scholars of which he is a member, the correct Marxism if you will, even though the very

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<sup>7</sup> For all we know she may have suggested this and the publisher may have rejected it given page length concerns.

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear whether this sweeping rejection of her entire scholarly career is based on an independent reading of her body of work given that *Marx and Education* (2011) is the only text by Anyon that Malott cites in his essay.

Marxists he uses for his litmus test do disagree with each other at times and seem to frequently disagree with the positions Malott has attributed to them.

Anyon (2011) fails Malott's (2011) litmus test on a number of grounds. He claims that she doesn't directly engage with Marx's work, "especially *Capital*" (p. 4). He makes this claim despite her calling for a resurgence of reading the original works of Marx, quoting him, and repeatedly referring to Marxist concepts in such a manner as to convey familiarity with his work (Anyon, 2011). Malott (2011) goes on to claim that the basic ideas of Marx that Anyon discusses are "outdated, primordial, and misses the central concept of Marx...[quoting McLaren & Jaramillo, 2010] the production of value in capitalist society and its effects on the conditions of the human race" (p. 6). These accusations are refuted by what Anyon actually wrote in *Marx and Education* (2011). For example, she argues that capitalism is for Marx "an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production" (p. 7). It is further refuted when she defines social class in Marxist terms as "a person's or group's relation to the means of production" (p. 11). The accusation that the Marxist concepts that Anyon introduces (see McGrew, 2011) are outdated is undermined by Malott (2011) himself arguing for many of these concepts or criticizing Anyon for allegedly failing to address them (Malott, 2011). Many of these allegedly outdated concepts are concepts that the Marxist scholars Malott identifies with argue for themselves (Allman, 2001, 2002; Cole, 2008; Hill, McLaren, Cole, & Rikowski, 2002).

Malott's (2011) claim that Anyon fails to grasp the basic concepts in Marx may result from his being overly eager to read such failure into any minor errors she may have made in word choice:

Anyon's analysis of Marx's basic concepts misses this point following instead the formula that argues that Marx believed that all workers should contribute to social reproduction based on their ability and should therefore share in the "profits" of their labor based on individual needs. There is a problem with this formulation. First and foremost, Marx's critique of capitalism was not designed to democratize capitalism, an oxymoronic notion that demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of Marx's theory. Rather, his work was a theory *against* class and therefore against capitalism. The goal is not to share "profits," but to dismantle the process of profit making, as Glenn Rikowski and others have made abundantly clear. This requires dismantling the basic relationship between labor and capital and the commodification of human labor power. (p. 9)

When we look at what Anyon (2011) actually wrote, that:

Capitalism's private ownership of production is also distinctive from a socialist/communist system as imagined by Marx, 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. 9)

We see, particularly in the context of the surrounding discussions and keeping in mind that she was providing a basic introduction to Marxism, that Malott is reading far too much into Anyon's use of the terms *profits* and *goods*. It is evident from the larger conversation in which she was engaging that she understands full well the need to replace capitalism with a system not based on the "profoundly unequal relationship between workers/employees and owners" (Anyon, 2011, p. 8). Aside from whether, debatably, Anyon erred in using these terms, her summation of Marx is correct, and

consistent with that provided by McLaren and Rikowski (2001) who describe, “Marx’s concept of ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.’”

### **Is Anyon secretly or unknowingly a liberal?**

Malott (2011) similarly takes the following statement by Anyon, that “Marx would have argued that it is not merit by which one advances in capitalist society so much as it is because of one’s social class background and the opportunities (or lack thereof) that this background affords,” to mean that her “focus” on mobility makes her Weberian, rather than Marxist. He then states that Marx would have made different arguments related to “false consciousness”<sup>9</sup> and ideology that prevent “workers from rebelling against the central relationship that negatively binds them to a system of exploitation that can only ever promise crisis and ever worsening conditions” (p. 9). Once again, when we read the surrounding context of Anyon’s (2011) statement, we see that she was describing the same concepts in Marx that Malott faults her for allegedly not addressing. For example, preceding the above quoted sentence with the mention of mobility, that Malott reads so much into, Anyon stated that, “In capitalism, according to Marx, economic class relations strongly influence the social situation outside of the work place... [including] ones’ political and other ideas and views” and that “Marx argued, in this vein, that the economic relation and social context in which the working class exists limits the worker’s ability to transcend her or his social situation” (p. 9). What Anyon actually wrote describes exactly the ideological barriers, generated in the “mode of production of material life” (p. 9), that prevent rebellion.

The accusation that Anyon is essentially liberal or unintentionally against Marxism (Malott, 2011) is very similar to the arguments of Strike (1989) and Price (1986) who each describe Bowles and Gintis (1976) as embracing a liberal perspective that seeks not equal outcomes but fair competition (McGrew, 2011). In both cases, like Malott, Price and Strike make their claims based on rather fine points of disagreement over how to understand Marx.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Malott in his discussion of Anyon’s work, neither Price nor Strike conclude, given the errors that they believe they have found, that the entire project of Bowles and Gintis is somehow anti-Marxist. Malott’s (2011) claim that Anyon’s work, and in particular her early work, is not Marxist is contradicted by his describing Bowles and Gintis as the “most early educational Marxists” (p. 4). This is a contradiction because Anyon’s early work tested and found empirical evidence supporting the correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis (Anyon, 2011; McGrew, 2011a). In other words, if Bowles and Gintis were Marxist, given that Anyon largely followed their theory, then she was Marxist as well.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that Allman (2001), one of the Marxist scholars Malott uses as ideal types for his Marxist litmus test, rejects false consciousness as a non-Marxist concept (p. 7). McLaren (1987) had also criticized the concept during his postmodern period.

<sup>10</sup> Though Price and Strike do more to explain their reasoning on these points than Malott has, I find their argument no more convincing than his when claiming that Bowles and Gintis have embraced liberal goals or methods.

<sup>11</sup> There seems to be general agreement among Marxist authors, including some of those with whom Malott identifies, that Bowles and Gintis are in fact Marxist (Brosio, 1994; Cole, 2008; Hill & Cole, 2001; Rikowski, 1997; Sarup, 1978; Small, 2005; McLaren, 2008).

### **Are reproduction and correspondence liberal concepts?**

Malott's (2011) claims that the focus on social class reproduction is Weberian and "hardly Marxist," and that Anyon ignores the "root causes of capitalism" (p. 4), are rather perplexing for several reasons. First, Malott acknowledged that the work of Bowles and Gintis is Marxist (p. 4). Given that *Schooling in Capitalist America* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) was concerned with social reproduction and the correspondence principal, this would appear to be another contradiction in logic. Because Anyon's focus on reproduction and correspondence followed the work of Bowles and Gintis so closely in her early career (Anyon, 2011), her conception of reproduction must be as Marxist as their focus on the same concept. Second, reproduction and correspondence, between the superstructure and base of capitalist production, are widely recognized as Marxist concepts (Apple, 1990; Brosio, 1994; McGrew, 2008, 2011; Price, 1986; Small, 2005; Strike, 1989). Third, some of the very Marxist authors that Malott (2011) uses for his litmus test recognize reproduction and correspondence as important Marxist concepts (Allman, 2001; Cole, 1988, 2008; Rikowski, 1997).

### **Did Anyon reject revolution?**

Malott (2011) has attempted to elevate a few brief statements in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011), such as revolution being "an old fashioned concept" (p. 18), to the level of a rejection of the need to replace capitalism with a planned socialist economy, when in reality these comments are not sufficient to support such a conclusion (McGrew, 2011). In attempting to support his claim that Anyon has abandoned revolution to work within the capitalist system, Malott (2011) quotes from a common high school history textbook in the United States in which Karl Marx is described as "extreme" for wanting to overthrow the capitalist system (p. 7). He then attempts to tie Anyon to this propaganda agenda:

Anyon similarly portrays the overthrow of capitalism as "extreme" or undesirable, which she states most clearly noting that, "'revolution' itself appears an old fashioned concept" (p. 18). What Anyon seems to be consenting here is the notion that capitalist hegemony is inevitable precluding any further shifts in paradigm resulting in the current labor/capital relationship or abstract labor as permanent allowing social commentators to claim the end of history, an idea championed after the 1989 fall of Soviet Communism. (p. 7)

The use of "extreme" in quotes suggests that Anyon had used the term in describing revolutionary aspirations. The word extreme is used 10 times (in one form or another) in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) but never as Malott implies here. Other efforts by Malott (2011) to bolster his claim that Anyon has rejected revolution rely on reading meanings into Anyon's statements that are not reasonable given what she actually wrote. For example, Malott takes her statement that the work of Marx has been used to "foster social revolution as well as repress it" as suggesting that there is "something in Marx's work that is repressive or authoritarian" (p. 6). What Anyon (2011) actually wrote, that "social commentators in various countries have used Marx to foster social revolution as well as repress it," (p. 7), along with the context of the paragraphs with which it was written, clearly indicate that she was faulting commentators and regimes for misusing Marx to undermine revolution rather than his work itself. Moreover, her statements here seem consistent with statements made by McLaren (2008, p. xi), one of the authors Malott claims to be aligned with.

In reality Anyon's (2011) statements related to revolution point to little more than a need for clarification. It is more likely that she was questioning the idea that revolutions always require force (see Cole, 2008; Nyberg, 1965), or the idea that the replacement of capitalism must occur suddenly at one swell swoop, than rejecting revolutionary change. I say this because she repeatedly makes or supports statements that imply the need for revolution (as defined as replacing capitalism). For example, she defines socialism as requiring replacing the "old bourgeois society" and social class divisions (Anyon, 2011, p. 9); language that is consistent with that used by Nyberg (1965) and by Castles & Wüstenberg (1979) when describing the need identified by Marx to create a classless society. As another example, Anyon (2011) describes, and seems to support, a "basic" idea of Marx that "class struggle by the industrial working class is key to revolutionary transformation" (p. 6). She seems to embrace the need for revolutionary change when she writes, "it is this class struggle which Marx saw as ultimately leading to the overthrow of capitalism and the possible development of socialism and communism – a democratic sharing of resources and profits" (p. 9).

### **Revolutionary process**

Malott's efforts to this point, believing that he has established that Anyon is against revolutionary change, are set up to argue that:

If the goal of Anyon's class analysis, like much of the educational left in general as documented by McLaren and Jaramillo (2010), is not to overthrow capitalism, it must be to reform it, and therefore should not be called Marxist or even *neo-Marxist*, but rather not-Marxist or pseudo-Marxist... (p. 8)

Because his set up consists of faulty arguments and conclusions, this claim is undermined. Moreover, his efforts reveal an understanding of revolution that has no conception of process. To struggle within the system as an interim stage is not to abandon an understanding of the need to transform the capitalist system. Malott would probably object to my use here of the word *transform* instead of *overthrow*. In so objecting he would obsess over a semantic difference where no substantial difference exists.

Marx having argued that the "struggle in the form of public contestation" could possibly increase equity from the system (Anyon, 2011, p. 3) indicates an understanding of process. Consider the following statements made by Paulo Freire (1994):

I think politically, every time we can occupy some position inside of the subsystem, we should do so. But as much as possible, we should try to establish good relationships with the experience of people outside the system in order to help what we are trying to do inside. (p.203)

By describing working both inside and outside of the system Freire was not abandoning the need to replace capitalism but rather was demonstrating an understanding of process in a dynamic and evolving situation. Marx described commencing "where we were" (Cole, 2008; McGrew, 2011; Padover, 1975) which also implies an understanding of the need for interim stages. As Castles and Wüstenberg (1979) stated, "Marxists never envisaged a direct transition from capitalism to communism, but have always seen the need for an intermediary state..." (p. 5). Even the move to socialism in Venezuela, a country that I believe Malott

(2011) is correct to hold up as a shining example, resulted from a democratic election working within the existing system. The people in Venezuela are still in the process of democratically determining the direction that the country should take both socially and economically (Cole, 2008, p. 139). Venezuela is not currently and may never be an example of the idealized “pure” communism that Malott seems to require. I don’t see that as necessarily being a problem. The point is that Malott would. He measures Anyon by his purity test, criticizes her for not praising Venezuela, and yet he ignores that much in Venezuela would also fail his purity test.

### **The Retreat from Class and Marx**

Malott (2011) criticizes Anyon for ignoring the “retreat from class” that he claims is associated with U.S. neo-Marxists in the 1970s such as Michael Apple (p. 12). I argue in my review of *Marx and Education* (McGrew, 2011) that more exploration of the debates around correspondence, reproduction, and resistance, with clarification of her position on them, would have been helpful. I have also faulted Apple and others for overstating the alleged lack of attention to agency and the allegedly overly reductive and deterministic understanding of structure in the work of Bowles and Gintis (McGrew, 2008; 2011a). That is far different than claiming that Michael Apple, and implying that Jean Anyon, have somehow abandoned class analysis. This is a strange claim for Malott to be making given that both Apple (1984; 1986; 1988; 1993; 2006) and Anyon (1981;1994; 1997; 2005; 2011) have addressed the importance of class throughout their careers. A clue as to why Malott (2011) would make such a claim is found in the way that he uses the terms *class* and *Marxism* almost interchangeably (p. 12). What he actually seems to be saying is that any class analysis that doesn’t conform to his understanding of class in Marx represents an abandonment of class/ Marxism (p. 2).

### **Gramsci**

Malott (2011) claims that the neo-Marxist project of demonstrating “how ideas and culture are used by dominant society as tools to reproduce various categories of social class preventing social mobility” is Weberian rather than Marxist because it is not a theory *against* class or capitalism (p. 3). He makes this claim in response to Anyon’s discussion of “*ideology, cultural capital, hegemony, counter-hegemony, selective tradition, and resistance*” (p. 3). Reading carefully in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011) we find that Anyon was crediting Antonio Gramsci and Michael Apple as having introduced her to many of these concepts that Malott considers anti-Marxist. He is indirectly implying, therefore, that both Gramsci and Apple do not challenge capitalism or class-based society and are themselves Weberian.

Malott’s sweeping dismissal of neo-Marxism, identifying both Apple and Gramsci as representative of it, is not reasonable. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony (Anyon, 2011, p. 13), for example, was a modification of Marx’s concept of ideology to explain the durability of capitalism (pp. 12-13; Allman, 2002); what Strike (1989) has described as the problem of the relative stability of capitalism (p. 149) and the acquiescence of the majority of the people (p. 150). Hegemony, therefore, is a concept that grows out of Marx, to defend Marxism, to explain why revolutions did not occur as he expected. Malott’s implied rejection of Gramsci as somehow against Marxism does not seem to be a view shared by most Marxist scholars, including some of those with whom he claims allegiance (Allman, 2001, 2002; Cole & Hill, 1995; McLaren, 2000, 2001; Rikowski, 1996; Sharp, 1980). The concept of cultural capital, likewise, is not inconsistent with Marxism (Apple, 1992). And while I have been highly critical

of both the resistance theory described by Paul Willis and the resistance theories attributed to him (McGrew, 2008, 2011a), there is nothing in the concept of resistance that is incompatible with Marxist analysis.

Apple responded to Malott's (2011) accusations in a personal communication (September 22, 2011) regarding my plans to critique Malott's essay:

I certainly have not led a move to dismiss class relations. Indeed, any careful reading of books such as *Educating the "Right" Way* shows that I am deeply committed to continuing class analysis, but that I reject as reductive a simplistic two class model. I argue that a particular class fraction—the professional and managerial new middle class—has increasing power in educational and social policy. In the process I argue that cultural capital plays a crucial role in this. I also argue that neoliberals and dominant class fractions are given more power through the alliance they have built with the new middle class and with other groups. In essence, my project is fundamentally a Gramscian one. Why no revolution? What is the creative ideological work at the level of common sense that dominant classes (and races) do to change common sense and achieve consent? I think that class is essential to this; but it does not offer an adequate explanation to the power of racial and racializing dynamics."<sup>12</sup>

Malott will likely view Apples' identification of his work as influenced by Gramsci as further evidence that he has abandoned class and Marxism. It seems that even Gramsci, smuggling out his work while imprisoned on orders of Mussolini, may not pass Malott's litmus test (Malott, 2011, pp. 3, 7). Apple is, of course, quite correct in counting Gramsci's understanding of hegemony as being Marxist. Apple did not reject class or Marx, but, rather, moved away from what he took to be reductive notions of reproduction and correspondence. In doing so I believe that he overstated, at times, his positions while stereotyping the work of Bowles and Gintis (McGrew, 2008, 2011a). Refusing to accept that Marx explained everything that had ever been and everything that was to come, however, does not amount to an abandonment Marxist or class analysis.

### **Postmodernism**

Because Anyon (2011) does not criticize Apple for allegedly abandoning class and Marx, Malott (2011) says that she appears to be "against Marxism yet calls herself a Marxist" (p. 12). He quotes Anyon on some of the reasons that there has been a move away from Marxist scholarship—reasons consistent with what other Marxists have argued (see McGrew, 2011)—yet simultaneously accuses her of "downplaying the retreat from class" (Malott, 2011, p. 12). In particular, Malott faults her for not discussing "the most comprehensive summary documenting the a retreat from class and attack on Marxism, which is arguably *Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory* by Dave Hill, Peter McLaren, Mike Cole, and

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<sup>12</sup> McLaren & Jaramillo (2010) seem to concede Apple's argument when they state that, "classical Marxism has helped us to view the class struggle not only as an economic struggle between the propertied and propertyless but also as a political struggle directed at the state (and here the hegemonic class is created through a system of alliances of class fractions that can best unify the power bloc)... The state is not a neutral site; it is not an autonomous region that miraculously floats above the messy world of class antagonisms. Here the state is viewed as a site where mechanisms to win consent are pivotal, where legitimization is struggled over by competing groups with various social, economic, and political interests" (p. 257).

Glenn Rikowski (2002)” (p. 12). Though Anyon (1994) has never been associated with postmodernism, Malott now condemns her for not condemning others for allegedly embracing the postmodern retreat from class.

It is ironic that Malott (2011) argues that Apple, and implies that Anyon, have abandoned class analysis and Marxism for postmodernism, while citing McLaren as one of the authors who has done a better job of opposing this postmodern abandonment of class. In 1994 McLaren and Lankshear, in the introduction to *The Politics of Liberation*, endorsed a postmodern notion of oppression that rejects “grand narratives” (p. 4) and “master narratives” (p. 10) in our “postmodern society” (p. 4). Similarly, McLaren writing with da Silva (1993) argued against “binary thinking” (p. 80) while seemingly embracing a “poststructuralist” or “postmodern” perspective (pp. 48, 58-59). Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) argued for a form of postmodernism stating that, “The kind of postmodern social theory we want to pose as a counterweight to skeptical and spectral postmodernism has been referred to as oppositional postmodernism... (p. 110). McLaren (2001a) admits his postmodern past in an interview stating that, “I can’t deny that there was a time when postmodern thinkers played a central role in my work” (p. xviii). To be fair it should be recognized that McLaren’s relationship to the postmodern has always been ambivalent, simultaneously seeking to adopt certain aspects of postmodern and post-structural theory while searching for a continued basis for struggle (McLaren, 1997, 1998). This is quite different from the unambiguous language he has chosen more recently, for example, that, “Postmodernism is an obstacle to the formation of open and radical perspectives that challenge inequalities and the deepening of the rule of capital in all areas of social life” (Rikowski & McLaren, 2002, p. 3). McLaren is entitled to change his mind and move towards a more traditional Marxist project, and I for one am glad that he has. It would, however, be more accurate to say that McLaren had contributed to a postmodern retreat from class than to say that Apple had.

### **Max Weber**

Malott (2011) claims that Anyon’s work has been Weberian since she first began publishing in the 1980s (p. 3). By calling her Weberian, Malott means to accuse Anyon of forgetting the inherent conflict between the capitalist class and the working class (Bourgeoisie and Proletariat) and therefore, to his way of thinking, of having abandoned Marxist class analysis for something merely called class. As he states:

Anyon is simply wrong to believe that her work is at all Marxist. Rather, as demonstrated below, her work is really grounded in a Weberian-oriented sociological analysis of social class and therefore advocates for a reformist, and indirectly pro-capitalist approach to change. In other words, just because Anyon takes social class as a central unit of analysis does not make her work Marxist. (p. 2)

When we look at what Anyon (1981) actually wrote early in her career, however, we see that in adopting a more complex understanding of class that she had not abandoned the Marxist understanding of class being tied to ones relationship to the means of production:

For the purposes of this study, social class is considered as a series of relationships to several aspects of the process in society by which goods,

services, and culture are produced. That is, while one's occupational status and income level contribute to one's social class, they do not define it. Contributing as well are one's relationships to the system of ownership of physical and cultural capital, to the structure of authority at work and in society, and to the content and process of one's own activity... One's relationship to all three of these aspects of production (to the systems of ownership and authority, and to work itself) determine one's social class. All three relationships are necessary and no single one is sufficient for determining a relation to the process of production in society. (p. 4)

Despite Weber's criticism of Marx (Löwith, 1993), the differences between them may have been exaggerated (Mommsen, 1977). Whatever one's position on the differences between them, to adopt some aspects of Weber's theory is not necessarily to abandon a Marxist project. On the few occasions that Anyon or Apple discuss Weber, it can hardly be argued that they are endorsing his theoretical perspectives *against* those of Marx (Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1986, 2001). Malott's (2011) repeated attempts to describe Apple and Anyon as advancing Weber over Marx seems to be based on the faulty assumption that to draw upon Weber, or otherwise envision multiple class groupings operating within the two primary classes, is somehow to reject class/Marx. That Malott would attempt to cast them out as enemies of Marxism simply because they don't adhere to his Marxist dogma is far more revealing than the accusations that he has made against them.

Malott's (2011) accusation that Apple has abandoned class seems to follow Kelsh & Hill (2006) who argue that Apple has adopted a Weberian notion of class at odds with a Marxist understanding of class, as well as Allman, McLaren, & Rikowski (2003) and McLaren & Rikowski (2001) who make similar arguments without naming names. These authors, unlike Malott in his essay, clearly articulate the reasons for their distinction between the Weberian and Marxist concepts of class as well as their reasons for criticizing those who do not emphasize a Marxist dichotomy between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Despite their arguments being clearly articulated I find them no more convincing than Malott when making these claims.

The criticism of Weberian influenced "multi-class formations" (McLaren & Rikowski, 2001), that Malott (2011) seems to be following, is that:

If you say somebody is upper class and then designate somebody else as lower class, the assumption is that there is a middle-class and the upshot of this classification system is the naturalization of the notion of progress within capitalism. All you do is too lend credence to the myth that it is possible for everyone to move up the ranks on the basis of hard work, fortitude, and perseverance. This justifies the social division of labor and class differentiation and mystifies the agonistic relations among the classes. When we talk about 'white collar' and 'blue collar' workers, we hide the existence of the working class and the fact that this class has common class interests. We hinder the development of a common class-consciousness among fractions within the working class. I prefer the term 'ruling class' or 'capitalist class' on the one hand, and 'working-class' on the other. (McLaren & Rikowski, 2001)

Similar arguments are made by Allman, McLaren and Rikowski (2003). While one could imagine—or actually cite—authors engaging in a multi-class formulation that minimizes the class struggle described by Marx, it does not follow therefore that all multi-class formulations are either Weberian or that they necessarily ignore the class

conflict inherent in the capitalist system. Rather than identifying authors of a liberal perspective who do explicitly argue against a Marxist understanding of class as related to capitalist production, Kelsh and Hill (2006) try to persuade us that Michael Apple is the poster child for the liberal assault on Marx. They assert that Apple's understanding of the social is "Weberian-based" and that his arguments only have the "appearance" of being radical because he uses terms like "class" and "the economic" and claims "to be making arguments for social change that involve the 'transformation' of capitalism."

In attempting to make the case that Apple is Weberian and therefore against class/Marx, Kelsh and Hill (2006) repeatedly take out of context and read far too much into statements made by Apple. For example, they claim that the "social transformation" he is committed to does not include replacing capitalism. When we look at what Apple actually wrote in the passage that they are referring to, however, we see that he was quoting Willis & Trondman (2000) and Touraine (2001) in order to challenge the idea that capitalism is the only possible system (Apple, 2003, p. 17); hardly a position contradictory to Marxism. Kelsh and Hill (2006) go on to claim that Apple wants to "eliminate poverty through greater income parity." When we look at this statement in the context in which it appears (Apple, 2001), however, we do not find evidence that Apple expects that greater income parity is possible within capitalism. In fact, this statement occurred within a criticism of market-based school reforms and was immediately preceded by this sentence, "However, we need to take seriously the probability that only by focusing on exogenous socioeconomic features, not simply the organizational features, of "successful" schools can all schools succeed" (p. 81). Of course, Kelsh and Hill (2006) take the very use of the term *socioeconomic*<sup>13</sup> as proof that Apple's use of *class* "is merely descriptive," by which they mean not Marxist. Looking at other statements that Apple made in the book regarding class and mobility we find him being highly critical of the myth of mobility and the idea that class-based inequalities are natural or inevitable (Apple, 2001, p. 21) while making statements in defense of class analysis that are clearly informed by Marx (p. 203).

### **The unity of opposites**

Kelsh and Hill (2006) repeatedly quote Apple discussing the inadequacy of a binary notion of class—that reduces everything to the economy without considering culture, race, and gender—as if these quotes somehow support their faulty conclusion that Apple has rejected an understanding of the inherent conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. They admit, quoting Apple from an article in 1992, for example, that he "cautions against forgetting class as central to capitalism" and as a "massive structuring force," but then conclude that, "Yet class for Apple is nevertheless, in his actual practices, an effect of the market, determined not by relation to property, but by relations within culture." They quote apple on capitalism being, "not only an economic system but a cultural system as well," and somehow conclude, nonetheless, that he has ignored the importance of capitalist relations. They insist that Apple is mistaken to assume that the "Marxist theory of class cannot address differences such as those of race and gender" but simultaneously insist on understanding race, gender, and culture as exclusively products of the production process, or, as they put it, "race *is* class, gender *is* class."

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that as recently as the year 2000 McLaren used the term favorably when describing the injustices that Freire opposed (p. 163).

This confusion is easily avoided by considering what Apple (1992) wrote in the article, which was written to caution against certain readings of Bernstein that might ignore the Marxist insights into class, regarding class having two parts: class structure and class formation (p. 137). There is simply nothing here to demonstrate—despite their self assurances that they have so demonstrated—that Apple’s efforts to construct a complex understanding of class, culture, race, and gender contradict the Marxist understanding of the inherent conflict between the working class and capitalist class; Marx, of course, having suggested the possibility of greater complexity than the two primary classes in his discussions of the *petite bourgeoisie* and ideologically informed consciousness (Anyon, 2011).

Kelsh and Hill (2006) like the other authors whom Malott (2011) seems to be following (Allman, McLaren and Rikowski, 2003; McLaren & Rikowski, 2001), make great efforts to demonstrate what they take to be the differences between Weber and Marx. Even if we accept the distinctions that they make between them, it does not follow, and I do not believe that they have made the case, that “Apple’s understanding of class borrows a great deal from Weber” nor that in allegedly doing so that he “works, in effect if not in intent, against the interests of the proletariat by blocking its ability to see itself as a class, and furthermore, as a class in relation to the capitalist class” (Kelsh & Hill, 2006). The same accusations leveled against Anyon by Malott fail for similar reasons. To put this more plainly, I see no evidence that Apple was abandoning the Marxist insight that the Proletariat have interests that are in conflict with those of the Bourgeoisie. Rather, he was complicating and adding to that insight.

Apple was not rejecting a Marxist understanding of class, but was, in a perhaps overly softened language, insisting on a theory that reflects the complexity of the real world and which understands that not all struggles over education can be “reduced to being only about the economy” (Apple, 2001, p. 36). Kelsh and Hill (2006) recognize that Apple generally “substitutes” terms such as “proletariat” and “capitalist class” with terms such as “dominant groups and classes” and “dominant economic elites.” In doing so he has not, as they claim, erased the material basis of class antagonism. Rather, what Apple may be guilty of, for a variety of reasons including his desire to hold onto complexity, is having used language that confuses both orthodox Marxists—who may only recognize Marxism when they see the language that they anticipate—and those not familiar with Marxism—who may fail to recognize the centrality of Marxist analysis in his work. As such, more direct language that identifies more clearly when Apple is following Marx, modifying Marx, or drawing on other influences, might help to minimize confusion.

It is counterproductive, unnecessary, and illogical to assume diametrical incompatibility between Marxism and the positions associated with neo-Marxism, particularly in the work of Apple and Anyon. The neo-Marxist approach, after all, explores the relative autonomy which may exist within production and the two major classes discussed by Marx; a project completely compatible with Marx given his discussion of the *petite bourgeoisie* (Small, 2005, p. 58) and class fractions (Marx & Engels, 1964), with relative autonomy being suggested in the distinction between the base and the super structure (Sarup, 1978, p. 151; Small, 2005, pp. 63, 98).<sup>14</sup> Even in particular instances where the positions articulated in neo-Marxism, or other scholarship, appear to be incompatible with orthodox Marxism on the surface we should not assume that one or the other must be completely wrong. We might expect

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<sup>14</sup> Allman (2001), one of the ideal type Marxists identified by Malott (2011), seems to concede the possibility of relative autonomy of social relations, including race and gender (p. 45).

Marxists who are used to thinking in terms of internal connections and the unity of opposites (Allman, 2001, pp. 6, 40, 47; McLaren, 2001, pp. xiv, xviii) to be more flexible. In their implicit unwillingness to allow for the possibility of internal connections beyond those specifically described by Marx, these orthodox Marxist scholars seem to be insisting that Marx had addressed every possible aspect of capitalist society and economy that existed during his lifetime. Moreover, they seem to be insisting that Marx had described capitalism as a static system for which history had stopped progressing. Of course, such views are not consistent with reality any more than they are consistent with the dialectical approach that Marx developed.

### **Structural arguments are inherently Marxist**

Malott (2011) complains that Anyon leaves the impression that “the educational left has been engaged in neo-Marxist work steadily since the 1970s” (p. 12). She would be correct to do so. There has, in fact, been steady neo-Marxist work, including work produced in the United States, since the 1960s. This work has steadfastly been produced by scholars such as Anyon and Apple despite the general move away from Marxism. The decline of Marxist analysis may appear worse than it has actually been because critical theory has served as a proxy theory for Marxism (Anyon, 2011; McGrew, 2011; Torres, 1999), with authors describing essentially Marxist perspectives without identifying as Marxists or even citing Marx. I certainly agree that this is problematic (McGrew, 2011). Both Anyon (2011) and I (2008, 2011) are arguing for a return to reading Marx, reading the Marxist literature, citing Marx, and identifying Marxist analysis as such. But Marxism by another name is still Marxism.<sup>15</sup>

Kelsh and Hill (2006) claim that, “in the Weberian understanding of class that Apple uses, there is no fundamental relation between the fact that Bill Gates has a billion dollars while those who produce microchips for Microsoft have only enough income on which to survive. What is hidden from view in Apple’s own uncritical use of critical theory is that Bill Gates is a billionaire *because* so many workers are exploited.” This claim is not reasonable when considered against Apple’s body of work. In making this faulty claim, however, Kelsh and Hill have conceded that the structural analysis of the economy they describe is inherently Marxist. The work of neo-Marxists and most critical theorists, whether they openly identify with Marx or not, has remained Marxist, knowingly so or not, *because* the structural analysis frequently found in this work is inherently Marxist (Anyon, 2011; Fine, 1991; MacLeod, 1995; McGrew, 2008, 2011, 2011a; Weis, 1990; Winn, 2010). Whatever else it may be in addition to being Marxist, and though the positions taken on various questions may differ from those that Malott and company would favor, this literature is at least in part Marxist given the structural perspective. Malott (2011) would not agree. Nothing, it seems, counts as Marxism for Malott unless it is explicitly called Marxism, shares his exact reading of Marx, includes exactly the conversations he believes must be included, and cites exactly the authors whom he believes should be cited.

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<sup>15</sup> One of Anyon’s (2011) stated reasons for writing *Marx and Education* was to show scholars who have an understanding of the social context of education the debt that they owe, albeit unknowingly, to Marx (pp. 5-6).

## Critical Pedagogy

Malott (2011) complains that Anyon doesn't cite these "international Marxist critical pedagogy" authors: Peter McLaren, Paula Allman, Mike Cole, Dave Hill, Deb Kelsh, Ramin Farahmandpur, Gregory Martin, Nathalia Jaramillo, Shahrzad Mojab, Himani Bannerji, Basis Bernstein,<sup>16</sup> and John Holst, whom he says, "collectively, represents the most cutting edge Marxist educational theory and practice of the past three decades" (p. 5).<sup>17</sup> Several of these authors are involved in what appears to be a coordinated effort to coopt the critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire (2006) and replace it with a more didactic approach to teaching orthodox Marxism. They generally refer to their approach as some variant of *revolutionary critical pedagogy*.<sup>18</sup> Because they are themselves arguing that their revolutionary pedagogy is different than the critical pedagogy that Anyon (2011) is describing, she was under no obligation to cite them, regardless of what Malott would have preferred she do.

## Is critical pedagogy adequate?

These authors, following McLaren (2000), repeatedly charge that critical pedagogy is either not Marxist enough in its conception or else has been stripped of its revolutionary character in practice (pp. 160-166, 185, 192; Martin, 2005; McLaren, 2008, p. xx; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, pp. 17, 50, 240-241; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2010; McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur, & Jaramillo, 2004). They propose their approach as the new, improved, and more revolutionary critical pedagogy. McLaren (2000) explains the distinction as follows:

*Critical pedagogy* constitutes a dialectical and dialogical process that instantiates a reciprocal exchange between teachers and students—an exchange that engages in the task of reframing, refunctioning, and reposing the question of understanding itself, bringing into dialectical relief the structural and relational dimensions of knowledge and its hydra-headed power/knowledge dimensions. *Revolutionary pedagogy* goes further still. It puts power/knowledge relations on a collision course with their own internal contradictions; such a powerful and often unbearable collision gives birth not to an epistemological resolution at a higher level but rather to a provisional glimpse of a new society freed from the bondage of the past, a vision in which the past reverberates in the present, standing at once outside the world and beside the world, in a place of insight where the subject recognizes she is in a world and subject to it, yet moving through it with the power to name it extopically so that hidden meanings can be revealed in the accidental contingencies of the everyday. (p. 185)

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<sup>16</sup> It is questionable whether Bernstein can be counted as either a Marxist theorist or critical pedagogue (Michael Apple, personal correspondence, October 2, 2011; Apple, 1992). It should also be noted, further contradicting the implied unanimity among the Marxist Scholars that Malott identifies with, that Kelsh and Hill (2006) reject Bernstein's work for what they take to be his view that "class is cultural."

<sup>17</sup> It is not clear if Malott (2011) is criticizing Anyon for not discussing these authors regarding Marxism in general or critical pedagogy in particular because he seems use the terms interchangeably (pp. 2, 4, 8, 10).

<sup>18</sup> They alternatively call their approach revolutionary critical pedagogy (Malott, 2011, p. 8; Martin, 2005; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 241), critical revolutionary pedagogy (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 244), radical pedagogy (Malott, 2011, p. 2; McLaren, 2000, p. 34; Martin, 2005; Holst, 2007), Marxist critical pedagogy (Malott, 2011, p. 5), revolutionary pedagogy (Malott, 2011, p. 5; McLaren, 2000, p. 34), contraband pedagogy (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, pp. 91-92), revolutionary working-class pedagogy (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 178), and socialist pedagogy (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 51).

This passage actually continues for another seven lines in one sentence, the reading of which, while equally entertaining, is not necessary in order to make the following observation: McLaren has not described a meaningful difference between Freire's critical pedagogy and his allegedly more revolutionary critical pedagogy.

The claim in this passage, from *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution* (McLaren, 2000), that a more revolutionary critical pedagogy is needed, hinges on the statement that Freire's critical pedagogy doesn't go far enough.<sup>19</sup> Because McLaren alternatively indicates, in the book, that Freire's critical pedagogy is either itself insufficient (pp. 164-169, 185) or else that it has been incorrectly applied by others (pp. 192-193), it is not clear why he believes that critical pedagogy should be replaced. Assuming that Freire's pedagogy has been misunderstood, it does not follow, therefore, that it must be replaced, when, presumably, arguing for the correct interpretation could correct the problem. It seems more likely that McLaren was arguing that Freire's critical pedagogy is itself not sufficient, given his claim that it doesn't go far enough. In what manner, then, does Freire's critical pedagogy, according to McLaren, not go far enough?

### **Is Freire an orthodox Marxist?**

Is Freire not sufficiently Marxist? Despite McLaren hinting that Freire's theoretical perspective might differ somewhat from more orthodox readings of Marx, including the sin of not prioritizing "class over other categories of oppression," (McLaren, 2000, p. 159) he tends, in the book, to essentially credit Marx for much of Freire's theory. Take as examples his arguing that the "linchpin" of Freire's pedagogy "is Marx's theory of consciousness/praxis" (p. 191), his referring to Freire's concept of *praxis* by the term *revolutionary praxis* (p. 192)—the term that Marx used (Small, 2005, p. 40)—and claiming that, "Freire's approach only makes sense when read in the context of Marx's negative concept of ideology and the epistemological and ontological shifts that his approach requires" (McLaren, 2000, p. 193). The tendency to read Freire *as* Marx is also found in more recent work by McLaren & Farhmandpur (2005, p. 53), by Allman (2001, pp. 172, 177), and by McLaren & Jaramillo (2010) when they state that, "The use of Marxist theory in the service of radical pedagogy—or what has come to be known over the last several decades as critical pedagogy" (p. 251). Because they attempt to describe Freire as an orthodox or classical Marxist, these authors do not seem, therefore, to be questioning Freire's Marxist commitment to revolutionary change.

### **Losing faith in the people**

McLaren (2000) seems to recognize Freire as sufficiently Marxist (p. 159). Why then does he argue that Freire's critical pedagogy is insufficient? Given that Freire was adequately revolutionary and Marxist in his commitments and aims, the problem must be at the level of practice. McLaren's revolutionary pedagogy appears to be aimed at teaching students Marxism. Freire's approach would not oppose examining Marxism in the classroom so long as it emerged from the students' investigation of the world and was presented in the correct dialogical spirit (Freire & Horton, 1990). Assuming that McLaren understands this, the problem he refers to, apparently, then, is not with curriculum. It seems reasonable to conclude, by process

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<sup>19</sup> McLaren, despite his argument that Freire's critical pedagogy doesn't go far enough, also refers on occasion to Freire's pedagogy *as* "revolutionary pedagogy" (McLaren, 2000, pp. 187, 191) or uses the terms critical pedagogy and revolutionary critical pedagogy interchangeably (McLaren & Jaramillo, 2010).

of elimination,<sup>20</sup> that what McLaren is actually critical of is the process of conscientization that Freire (2006) describes. He is apparently impatient with the process and unwilling to risk that students will not come to the questions and conclusions that he desires.<sup>21</sup>

What McLaren seems to be suggesting is an approach that if not directly didactic in its banking, say depositing by lecture, would attempt to constrict or manipulate the conversation so as to arrive at his desired ends, the creation of dogmatic Marxists like himself. His allegedly more radical pedagogy appears, from a Freirean perspective, to result from having lost faith in the people. As such the pedagogy suggested is imposition.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is a form of violence that would further castigate the oppressed by seeking to impose the desired revolutionary outcome on them, locking them into a relationship of dependence that prevents authentic and lasting liberation (see Freire, 2006).

### Coopting Freire

Space does not allow for the redress that this attempt at cooption of the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire deserves. For now I would point out that the authors who are advocating for the allegedly more revolutionary critical pedagogy, in addition to forgetting the importance of the non-impositional nature of problem-posing dialogue<sup>23</sup> that Freire describes, seem to make the mistake of reducing Freire's scholarship simply to being Marxist (in the image of their dogma).<sup>24</sup> Though Marx is a significant influence in Freire's work, his theory combined several traditions that were equally important to him. More to the point, Freire's concept of oppression described both capitalism and more than capitalism. Oppression was not simply, for Freire, another word for capitalist and he did not believe that the end of capitalist accumulation (see Malott, 2011, p. 13) would eliminate oppression. As I have argued previously, Capitalism, for Freire, "is human greed, expressed in the dehumanization of and exploitation of others, manifest in an ideologically driven economic system" (McGrew, 2008, p. 12). Additionally, Allman (2001) seems to fundamentally misread Freire's critical pedagogy as requiring students to enter into the dialogical process already committed to social transformation (pp. 178, 212), a situation that would, if it existed as she imagines, tend to undermine their goal of using revolutionary critical pedagogy to create an army of young orthodox (or classical) Marxist revolutionaries.

I do not believe that McLaren or Allman have made the case that Freire's critical pedagogy is insufficient or that the pedagogy they propose improves upon it, at least not in terms of revolutionary commitments, aims, or curriculum. If it is

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<sup>20</sup> This effort to sift out why exactly McLaren makes his distinction between his proposed pedagogical approach and Freire's pedagogy becomes necessary because McLaren is not very specific, despite considerable pontification, as to what exactly he would have his revolutionary teachers do in actual classrooms. It is also necessary because of his alternatively distinguishing *revolutionary critical pedagogy* from Freire's *critical pedagogy*, attributing *revolutionary critical pedagogy* to Freire, or using the terms interchangeably.

<sup>21</sup> This impatience is perhaps hinted at when McLaren (2000) states that, "In the theater of battle, Che did not have time to create the conditions for peasants to achieve conscientization before he tried to conscript them into his guerrilla project" (p. 188).

<sup>22</sup> Allman (2001) claims, for example, that all Freirean education is "prescriptive" and "directive" (p. 205). She misstates Freire's position here (see Freire and Horton, 1990). Allman is correct that for Freire the educator's role was not as mere facilitator but neither was it prescriptive or directive, exercising "authority" over students thinking (p. 205).

<sup>23</sup> I say this given the logical implications of the totality of their arguments, despite Allman (2001) mentioning that imposition contradicts the principles of Freire's pedagogy (p. 178).

<sup>24</sup> Anyon (2011) may also be too quick to read critical pedagogy in simple Marxist terms (p. 97-98).

Freire's insistence on non-imposition that they disagree with, let them explain, with specific examples at the level of practice, how their approach would be different, and let their approach stand on the strengths of their arguments, without attempting to coopt Freire's approach—and the name *critical pedagogy*—for an approach that contradicts the heart of his pedagogy.<sup>25</sup> For all the reasons discussed in this section, I don't make much of Malott's (2011) criticism of Anyon for not citing McLaren, and the authors who are following him, in his attempts to reinvent (or coopt) critical pedagogy. The extension of critical pedagogy that Anyon (2011) describes differs significantly from the *revolutionary critical pedagogy* described by McLaren and company. Their pedagogy also has not been an influenced on her thinking on this issue, so we should not expect, despite Malott's insistence, that she would cite them when discussing critical pedagogy.

### **Revolutionary Praxis**

Malott (2011) states, given the problems that he believes he finds in *Marx and Education* (Anyon, 2011), that if he used her book he “would not engage the students in a passive reading of the text” but rather “would read it actively drawing on the voices of educational Marxists not included in the book” (Malott, 2011, p. 5). This statement provides, I think, a window into the problem with how Malott, and others, approach what is at the heart of Marxism, *revolutionary praxis*. Everything should be read in the critical manner in which Malott says he would read Anyon, nothing should be read passively, including the original works of Marx. Everything must be open to re-examination in light of new evidence, historical developments, and counter arguments. Malott seems to understand the need for action—his understanding of revolution—and of the need for theory—his dogma—but seems to have forgotten the “dialectical feedback loop between action and theory” (McGrew, 2011, p. 10). When Kelsh and Hill (2006) complain that Apple, “privileges experiential knowledge over theoretical knowledge, and in particular, classical Marxist theory,” they seem to make the same mistake. True praxis must entertain even the possibility of revising major tenants of Marxist thought. This attention to evidence is what makes revolutionary praxis scientific (Allman, 2001; Cole, 2008; Harris, 1979; Hook, 1955; Morgan, 2003; Nyberg, 1965; Pines, 1993; Price, 1986; Small, 2005). McLaren (2000) concedes this, knowingly or not, when he quotes James Petras describing Che Guevera's understanding of praxis as “a living reinvention of the Marxist categories of ‘class struggle’ and ‘class politics’ in a changing context” (p. 45).

Malott (2011), and the Marxists he includes in his vanguard, despite the differences between them that he does not address, do share a tendency to read the world according to their orthodox understanding of Marx. This tendency probably results from a combination of respect for the power of his thought and gratitude for what his work has meant for them in their personal journeys to be more fully realized human beings. Reading the contemporary economic and social world according to a strict adherence to Marxism (as Marx left it for us in 1883) is problematic, however, because it requires ignoring historical developments, areas of Marxist thought that

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<sup>25</sup> Freire demonstrated a radical commitment to non-imposition while he was Secretary of Education for the São Paulo School System, allowing the staff at each school to vote on whether to participate in reforms (Freire, 2003; O'Cadiz, Wong, & Torres, 1999). I am not convinced that it would be wrong to require teachers to adopt a critical pedagogical approach. I nonetheless recognize and respect his position. At the level of practice in the classroom, however, I am in complete agreement with this commitment.

have been developed further than Marx had during his life, and counter evidence that qualifies or even undermines some of his positions. In their zeal to prevent the further development of Marxism, which they take as betrayal, orthodox followers of Marx even resort at times, ironically, to closing the doors that Marx had himself left open for these developments. McLaren described this problem in 1987 (before his turn to a more orthodox Marxist theoretical orientation):

Regrettably, the traditional sectarian orthodoxy within Marxism threatens to foreclose its critical appropriation of new theoretical advances. Of course, this observation is hardly new, having been made on numerous occasions, most notably perhaps in E. P. Thompson's attack on structuralist Marxism in *The Poverty of Theory*... Thompson argues that structuralist Marxism in some ways constitutes a version of religious practice; it does not involve a direct approach to real problems of understanding the world. Rather than attempting to confront social and political events, structuralist Marxism concerns itself only with the logical problems of theoretical analysis, working through the careful exposition of sacred texts... In a somewhat similar vein, Aronowitz writes that "just as no Christian theologian can deny God no matter how revolutionary his/her account of the fate of humans, Marxism is tied to a discursive structure in which ideas such as the mode of production, mediation, crisis and historical agency possess transhistorical priority." (p. 311)

This is surely not how Marx would want his present followers approach his work. The best way to honor the memory of and continue the work of Marx is, as Freire said of his own contribution, to recreate him for new contexts and historical periods (in Macedo, 1994, p. xiv).<sup>26</sup>

When Anyon, Apple, and other critical scholars, point to multiple class formations and conflicts within these (Anyon, 2011; Apple, 2001; Domhoff, 1979; Mills, 1956), to the relative autonomy of culture, race, and gender (Apple, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 2005), or to the destabilizing impact of inequality under capitalism (Anyon, 2011), they do so, at least in part, in response to evidence. Even the mistakes that I have identified related to resistance theory in the critical literature (McGrew, 2008, 2011a) result, at least in part, because Apple, and others, were attempting to accommodate what they took to be the trustworthy findings of Willis (1981). Marx was not afraid of engaging with evidence that might challenge his assumptions. He read extensively when formulating his theory and even included counter evidence when explaining why he reached his ultimate conclusions (Allman, 2001, p. 46). If Marx were writing today he would undoubtedly consider the same evidence that neo-Marxist scholars have examined as well as the changes in capitalist production and technology that have occurred since his death. If Marx were writing today I suspect that Malott, and those who share his take on Marx, would be compelled to label the living Marx as a neo-Marxist,<sup>27</sup> if not a Weberian pawn for the capitalist class.

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<sup>26</sup> In McLaren & Jaramillo (2010) concede, in a manner that seems to contradict McLaren's usual defense of orthodox (or classical) Marxism as well as that of the authors with whom he and Malott are associated, when they state that: "Bringing Marxist thought into critical pedagogy requires us to contemplate both the affordances and limitation of Marx's writing and its compatibility with the current historical moment" (p. 257).

<sup>27</sup> In fact many of the arguments made and positions taken by Marx are consistent with neo-Marxism, and certainly don't contradict neo-Marxism as represented in the work of Anyon and Apple. Some of

That there have been developments in society and capitalism that Marx did not predict is undeniable (Anyon, 2011; Harris, 1982). Marx could not anticipate the unprecedented levels of automation that robotics have produced or the ease with which both labor and capital can be moved around the globe given the internet and similar technology. In short, Marx expected the proletariat to have far more leverage over the capitalist class than it has today. Building a socialist future, therefore, may not be so straightforward a process as orthodox Marxists would like to believe. Moreover, it must be realized that the capitalist class is a class *for* itself, not simply for capitalism. In the absence of capitalism, the ruling elite will, as the Soviet Union and Communist China so clearly demonstrate, seek new ways to maintain advantage in their addiction to always having more (see Freire, 2006). Greed, exploitation, and oppression predate capitalism. Socialism, though representing significant progress, will not eliminate them from the human heart. The “new man,” therefore, will not be born but must be ever be strived towards.

### **Conclusion**

In attempting to expose Anyon (2011) as allegedly being a liberal enemy of Marxism, Malott (2011) actually exposed his own dogmatic approach to Marxist analysis. His attempt to present himself as a member of a unified group of orthodox educational Marxists, ignoring the disagreements between them while inaccurately attributing positions to them, say as much about his own needs as it does about their collective contribution. Though these authors do disagree with each other, and frequently have positions that differ from those that Malott mistakenly assigns to them, they do share a similar understanding of Marx, and have worked in a coordinated manner to advance their perspective (citing each other, co-authoring, and publishing in many of the same journals, with some of them serving on the editorial board of this journal). While these authors have made an important contribution in their efforts to use Marx to explain contemporary education, society, and economy, they have also tended to dismiss perspectives that differ from their own and to ignore counter evidence. This “circle of certainty” (Freire, 2006) inevitably leads to a narrowing of vision, exclusion of those who are not members of their collective, and eventually may result in their turning on each other over ever finer points of disagreement. It is the offspring of this dogmatic orthodoxy, their sectarian desire, shared by Malott, to cast out as enemies of Marxism anyone who deviates from their positions, that I am opposing in this critique of Malott’s essay.

Throughout this article I have argued that dogmatic approaches to Marxism actually contradict the process of praxis by preventing consideration of multiple interpretations; differences of interpretation and analysis being not only inevitable but also beneficial. I have pointed to instances in the scholarship of Malott (2011), and others, where their adherence to a narrow reading of Marx has led them to incorrectly take arguments and concepts that had developed out of Marx, in support of Marx, as being against Marxism. I have pointed to examples of the tendency to read everything as either conforming or not conforming to the Marxist truth (that they believe they are in possession of) causing them to read far too much into phraseology and minor errors, absent consideration of context or author’s intent. I have revealed how this urge to purge causes them to either cast out those with whom they differ or else to attempt to coopt them if they believe the association would be beneficial. I have

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the arguments that Malott makes in his effort to dismiss neo-Marxism, therefore, could be seen as applying to Marx as well.

argued that this divisiveness is unnecessary as even positions that may seem contradictory on the surface may be united internally in a manner consistent with Marxism.<sup>28</sup> I have argued that praxis requires a willingness to modify or even reject aspects of Marxist theory given emerging evidence and historical developments, because the very need for a dialectical approach demonstrates our limited ability to grasp reality; a limitation that, having been human, must apply to Marx as well.

I began this article with a quotation from James Connolly, the Irish Republican Socialist revolutionary leader who united various factions of Irish nationalism, labor, and socialism, culminating with the Easter Rising of 1916, that being brutality put down by the British occupational forces, inspired the Irish Revolution (Lloyd, 2003; Morgan, 1988). I selected this particular quote because of its practical application of the principle of praxis to building unity among differences on the Left as well as his understanding that interpretations and ideas must be kept or discarded as they prove useful in struggle. Connolly did not merely seek to unite divergent movements in a temporary alliance of convenience against a common enemy. Rather, he recognized the insights in their analysis and respectfully compared competing perspectives and approaches in light of the development of events (Connolly, 1909, 1910). Connolly, who had been adamantly opposed to armed struggle in pursuit of an independent socialist republic, primarily because he saw no way of defeating the military might of the British Empire, proved his commitment to praxis when he changed his position in response to the onset of the First World War.

Neo-Marxists such as Anyon and Apple as well as more orthodox Marxists such as McLaren and Hill, present reasonable interpretations of the available literature and evidence, much of the time at least, in their attempts to read and change the world. Neo-Marxists believe that the insights gained from Marxist analysis must be joined by the insights they find in other approaches and must be modified given new evidence and historical developments. More orthodox Marxists believe that Marx provided a reading of the world that predicted and explains current developments in capitalism and society. More importantly, they view efforts to treat Marxism as just one theoretical tool among many as undermining both the unity in Marxism along with the understanding that capitalist production is the primary foe that must be defeated. Both perspectives, given that they each emerge from attempts to accurately read the world, must be considered. I oppose the tendency in both Marxism and neo-Marxism to stereotype, unfairly criticize, or otherwise dismiss the whole of the other approach.<sup>29</sup>

In my rejection of efforts to label neo-Marxists as not Marxist at all (Malott, 2011), it is not my desire to return the favor by silencing our more orthodox

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<sup>28</sup> Even discussions of multiple forms of power beyond class power (see Tanabe, 1998), generally associated with postmodern theory, are not necessarily contradictory to Marxist class analysis, depending on the specific arguments made by given authors.

<sup>29</sup> I find wisdom in many of the positions associated with neo-Marxism as well as those associated with classical and orthodox Marxism. While I often reject positions for which I don't see adequate support, it is also often the case that seemingly contradictory positions are supportable. I reconcile these seemingly contradictory positions within a pragmatic framework (Dewey, 1916/1944; Maxcy, 2003; Skrtic, 1991), understanding that differing theories give us different ways to look at social phenomena that, collectively, bring us closer to comprehending the complexity that can never be completely captured by theory, much less a single theory. Marxism continues to inform my analysis, therefore, because it is supported by evidence and because it is useful. From where I sit it appears that authors working on both sides of the Marxist continuum often make the same mistake, of attempting to construct a singular unified theory, which leads them to reject the perspective provided by the other side wholesale.

comrades. The close reading of Marx that they engage in is necessary to the larger project of determining, in changing contexts, what Marx continues to adequately explain and where it might need modification (or even help from perspectives outside of Marxism). Neo-Marxism (which includes scholars who identify as such and those who engage in Marxist structural analysis without so identifying), therefore, needs more classical or orthodox Marxism as a foundation from which to deviate when necessary. I believe that the neo-Marxist project of drawing upon a broader array of theoretical approaches represents necessary progress. Though more orthodox Marxists like Malott may not agree, they should recognize, at a minimum, that their efforts to find converts will be hampered by demanding that they immediately accept hook, line, and sinker every tenant of their platform. They should recognize that neo-Marxist scholarship like Anyon's *Marx and Education* (2011) or Apple's (1996) discussion of international capital, consumerism, and cultural politics being related to the demand for cheap French fries, however much they may disagree with them at times, provide broad audiences access to structural analysis that will garner nibbles, if you will, that will eventually bring converts to their Marxist platform. For this reason, if not others, orthodox Marxism needs neo-Marxism as well.

It is my sincere hope that Malott, McLaren, Hill, Rikowski, Allman, and others, will abandon the sectarian urge to purge so that we can engage together in the collective project of building a socialist future. I hope they will remember that it was not capitalists who exiled Trotsky and that capitalists were probably not those responsible for his murder (Morgan, 2003). It is sectarianism in the Left, more than a failure to unify under a given platform, or in a given organization, that has plagued and undermined efforts on the Left to build a socialist future. It's time that we stopped making that same mistake. It is not necessary that these more orthodox or classical Marxist authors abandon their positions for those that I have advanced in this article in order to engage in this larger collective project. They need simply desist from the divisive politics of as casting out as enemies those whom, though differing on one or many particular positions or concepts in their socialism, have also paid a price for identifying as Marxists while fighting battles against capitalist exploitation and imperialism. After all, what greater insult can there be than to call a dedicated socialist a liberal enemy of Marxism? Neo-Marxist authors should help to bridge the gap by more explicitly, rather than in coded language recognizable only to the initiated, discussing the Marxist influences on their thinking; Anyon's (2011) *Marx and Education* is an attempt to do just that. Neo-Marxists should also acknowledge the contribution made by more orthodox Marxists even as they delineate their disagreements with them.<sup>30</sup> They need not abandon their neo-Marxist positions in order to do so. Recognizing that we are all sincere in our efforts to build a socialist future, let us continue to agree and disagree in a spirit of solidarity, knowing that our ability to examine all of these differing perspectives is part of the process of revolutionary praxis, and leaving it to the development of events to prove which position was most useful in a given historical situation.

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<sup>30</sup> This is one of the reasons that I (2011) suggested that Anyon should have considered including in *Marx and Education* (2011) a list of Marxist educational scholarship for future reading, including many of the authors that Malott identifies with, even though their work was not directly relevant to the task she had undertaken.

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