

go in any one unidimensional direction. Even more important, these multiple examples demonstrate that the success of conservative policies is never guaranteed. This is crucial in a time when it is easy to lose sight of what is necessary for an education worthy of its name.

Why taking a position that might be called "optimism, but without illusions" is important will become clearer in the next chapter where I discuss in much greater depth not only the effects of the forces of conservative modernization on the policies and practices of schools, but also weaknesses of many of the ways the supposed alternative—"critical pedagogy"—deals with them.

Chapter 3



Producing Inequalities: Conservative Modernization in Policy and Practice

GRITTY MATERIALITIES

For the past two or more decades, even before the new hegemonic bloc I have been describing assumed power, a body of literature in education has grown that has sought to help us think politically about curriculum, teaching, and evaluation. I myself have participated in the building of these critical perspectives. Much of the literature on "critical pedagogies" has been politically and theoretically important and has helped us make a number of gains. However, given what I said in the past two chapters, this literature has some characteristics that limit its effectiveness in mounting serious challenges to what is happening all around us. It too often has not been sufficiently connected to the ways in which the current movement toward conservative modernization both has altered common-sense and has transformed the material and ideological conditions surrounding schooling. It, thereby, sometimes becomes a form of what best be called "romantic possibilitarian" rhetoric, in which

the language of possibility substitutes for a consistent tactical analysis of what the balance of forces actually is and what is necessary to change it.¹

In this chapter, I examine in even more detail the ways in which the social and cultural terrain of educational policy and discourse has been altered "on the ground" so to speak. I argue that we need to make closer connections between our theoretical and critical discourses on the one hand and the real transformations that are currently shifting educational policies and practices in fundamentally rightist directions on the other. Thus, part of my discussion is conceptual, but part of it appropriately is more empirical than in Chapter 2 in order for me to pull together what is known about the real and material effects of the shift to the right in education.

My focus on the "gritty materialities" of these effects is not meant to dismiss the importance of theoretical interventions. Nor is it meant to suggest that dominant discourses should not be constantly interrupted by the creative gains that have emerged from various neo-Marxist, feminist, postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, queer, and other communities. Indeed, critical pedagogies *require* the fundamental interruption of common-sense. However, while the construction of new theories and utopian visions is important, it is equally crucial to base these theories and visions in an unromantic appraisal of the material and discursive terrain that now exists. Common-sense is already being radically altered, but not in directions that any of us on the left would find comforting. Without an analysis of such transformations and of the balance of forces that have created such discomfiting alterations, without an analysis of the tensions, differential relations of power, and contradictions within it, we are left with increasingly elegant new theoretical formulations, but with a less than elegant understanding of the field of social power on which they operate.²

RIGHT TURN

In his influential history of curriculum debates, Herbert Kliebard has documented that educational issues have consistently involved major

conflicts and compromises among groups with competing visions of "legitimate" knowledge, what counts as "good" teaching and learning, and what is a "just" society.³ That such conflicts have deep roots in conflicting views of racial, class, and gender justice in education and the larger society is ratified in even more critical recent work as well.⁴ These competing visions have never had equal holds on the imagination of educators or the general citizenry nor have they ever had equal power to effect their visions. Because of this, no analysis of education can be fully serious without placing at its very core a sensitivity to the ongoing struggles that constantly shape the terrain on which education operates.

Today is no different from the past. As I argued in Chapter 2, a "new" set of compromises, a new alliance, and new power bloc have been formed that have increasing influence in education and all things social. This power bloc combines multiple fractions of capital who are committed to neoliberal marketized solutions to educational problems, neoconservative intellectuals who want a "return" to higher standards and a "common culture," authoritarian populist religious fundamentalists who are deeply worried about secularism and the preservation of their own traditions, and particular fractions of the professionally oriented new middle class who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement, and "management." Although clear tensions and conflicts exist within this alliance, in general its overall aims are to provide the educational conditions believed necessary both for increasing international competitiveness, profit, and discipline and for returning us to a romanticized past of the "ideal" home, family, and school.⁵

In essence, the new alliance has integrated education into a wider set of ideological commitments. The objectives in education are the same as those which guide its economic and social welfare goals. They include the dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside the school; the lowering of people's expectations for economic security; the "disciplining" of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of Social Darwinist thinking, as the

recent popularity of *The Bell Curve* so obviously and distressingly indicates.⁶

The seemingly contradictory discourse of competition, markets, and choice on the one hand and accountability, performance objectives, standards, national testing, and national curriculum on the other has created such a din that it is hard to hear anything else. Even though these seem to embody different tendencies, they actually oddly reinforce each other and help cement conservative educational positions into our daily lives.⁷

While lamentable, the changes that are occurring present an exceptional opportunity for serious critical reflection. In a time of radical social and educational change, it is crucial to document the processes and effects of the various and sometimes contradictory elements of the conservative restoration and of the ways in which they are mediated, compromised with, accepted, used in different ways by different groups for their own purposes, and/or struggled over in the policies and practices of people's daily educational lives.⁸ I give a more detailed sense of how this might be happening in current "reforms" such as marketization and national curricula and national testing in this chapter. For those interested in critical educational policies and practices, not to do this means that we act without understanding the shifting relations of power that are constructing and reconstructing the social field of power. While Gramsci's saying "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" has a powerful resonance to it and is useful for mobilization and for not losing hope, it would be foolish to substitute rhetorical slogans for the fuller analysis that is undoubtedly required if we are to be successful.

NEW MARKETS, OLD TRADITIONS

Historically, behind a good deal of the New Right's emerging discursive ensemble was a position that emphasized "a culturalist construction of the nation as a (threatened) haven for white (Christian) traditions and values."⁹ This involved the construction of an imagined national past that is at least partly mythologized, and then employing it to castigate

the present. Gary McCulloch argues that the nature of the historical images of schooling has changed. Dominant imagery of education as being "safe, domesticated, and progressive" (that is, as leading toward progress and social/personal improvement) has shifted to become "threatening, estranged, and regressive."¹⁰ The past is no longer the source of stability, but a mark of failure, disappointment, and loss. This is seen most vividly in the attacks on the "progressive orthodoxy" that supposedly now reigns supreme in classrooms in many nations.¹¹

For example, in England—though much the same is echoed in the United States, Australia, and elsewhere—Michael Jones, the political editor of *The Sunday Times*, recalls the primary school of his day:

Primary school was a happy time for me. About 40 of us sat at fixed wooden desks with ink wells and moved from them only with grudging permission. Teacher sat in a higher desk in front of us and moved only to the blackboard. She smelled of scent and inspired awe.¹²

The mix of metaphors invoking discipline, scent (visceral and almost "natural"), and awe is fascinating. But he goes on, lamenting the past thirty years of "reform" that transformed primary schools. Speaking of his own children's experience, Jones says:

My children spent their primary years in a showplace school where they were allowed to wander around at will, develop their real individuality and dodge the 3Rs. It was all for the best, we were assured. But it was not.¹³

For Jones, the "dogmatic orthodoxy" of progressive education "had led directly to educational and social decline." Only the rightist reforms instituted in the 1980s and 1990s could halt and then reverse this decline.¹⁴ Only then could the imagined past return.

Much the same is being said on this side of the Atlantic. These sentiments are echoed in the public pronouncements of such figures as William Bennett, E. D. Hirsch Jr., and others, all of whom seem to believe that progressivism is now in the dominant position in educational

policy and practice and has destroyed a valued past. All of them believe that only by tightening control over curriculum and teaching (and students, of course), restoring "our" lost traditions, making education more disciplined and competitive as they are certain it was in the past—only then can we have effective schools. These figures are joined by others who have similar criticisms, but who instead turn to a different past for a different future. Their past is less that of scent and awe and authority, but one of market "freedom." For them, nothing can be accomplished—even the restoration of awe and authority—without setting the market loose on schools so as to ensure that only "good" ones survive.

We should understand that these policies are radical transformations. If they had come from the other side of the political spectrum, they would have been ridiculed in many ways, given the ideological tendencies in our nations. Further, not only are these policies based on a romanticized pastoral past, these reforms have not been notable for their grounding in research findings. Indeed, when research has been used, it has often either served as a rhetoric of justification for preconceived beliefs about the supposed efficacy of markets or regimes of tight accountability or they have been based—as in the case of Chubb and Moe's much publicized work on marketization—on quite flawed research.¹⁵ Yet, no matter how radical some of these proposed "reforms" are and no matter how weak the empirical basis of their support, they have now redefined the terrain of debate of all things educational. After years of conservative attacks and mobilizations, it has become clear that "ideas that were once deemed fanciful, unworkable—or just plain extreme" are now increasingly being seen as common-sense.¹⁶

Tactically, the reconstruction of common-sense that has been accomplished has proven to be extremely effective. For example, clear discursive strategies are being employed here, ones that are characterized by "plain speaking" and speaking in a language that "everyone can understand." (I do not wish to be wholly negative about this. The importance of these things is something many "progressive" educators, including many writers on critical pedagogy, have yet to understand.)¹⁷ These strategies also involve not only presenting one's own position as

"common-sense," but also usually tacitly implying that there is something of a conspiracy among one's opponents to deny the truth or to say only that which is "fashionable."¹⁸ As Gillborn notes,

This is a powerful technique. First, it assumes that there are no *genuine* arguments against the chosen position; any opposing views are thereby positioned as false, insincere or self-serving. Second, the technique presents the speaker as someone brave or honest enough to speak the (previously) unspeakable. Hence, the moral high ground is assumed and opponents are further denigrated.¹⁹

It is hard to miss these characteristics in some of the conservative literature such as Herrnstein and Murray's publicizing of the unthinkable "truth" about genetics and intelligence or E. D. Hirsch's latest "tough" discussion of the destruction of "serious" schooling by progressive educators.²⁰

MARKETS AND PERFORMANCE

Let us take as an example of the ways in which all of these arguments operate one element of conservative modernization—the neoliberal claim that the invisible hand of the market will inexorably lead to better schools. As Roger Dale reminds us, "the market" acts as a metaphor rather than an explicit guide for action. It is not denigrative, but connotative. Thus, it must itself be "marketed" to those who will exist in it and live with its effects.²¹ Markets are marketed, are made legitimate, by a depoliticizing strategy. They are said to be natural and neutral, and governed by effort and merit. And those opposed to them are by definition, hence, also opposed to effort and merit. Markets, as well, are supposedly less subject to political interference and the weight of bureaucratic procedures. Plus, they are grounded in the rational choices of individual actors.²² Thus, markets and the guarantee of rewards for effort and merit are to be coupled together to produce "neutral," yet pos-

itive, results. Mechanisms, hence, must be put into place that give evidence of entrepreneurial efficiency and effectiveness. This coupling of markers and mechanisms for the generation of evidence of performance is exactly what has occurred. Whether it works is open to question. Indeed, as I shall show shortly, in practice neoliberal policies involving market "solutions" may actually serve to reproduce—not subvert—traditional hierarchies of class and race. Perhaps this should give us reason to pause?²³

Thus, rather than taking neoliberal claims at face value, we should want to ask about their hidden effects that are too often invisible in the rhetoric and metaphors of their proponents. I shall select a number of issues that have been given less attention than they deserve, but on which there is now significant research.

The English experience is apposite here, especially since proponents of the market such as Chubb and Moe rely so heavily on it²⁴ and because that is where the tendencies I analyze are most advanced. In England, the 1993 Education Act documents the state's commitment to marketization. Governing bodies of local educational authorities (LEAs) were mandated to formally consider "going GM" (that is, opting out of the local school system's control and entering into the competitive market) every year.²⁵ Thus, the weight of the state stood behind the press toward neoliberal reforms there.²⁶ Yet, rather than leading to curriculum responsiveness and diversification, the competitive market has not created much that is different from the traditional models so firmly entrenched in schools today.²⁷ Nor has it radically altered the relations of inequality that characterize schooling.

In their own extensive analyses of the effects of marketized reforms "on the ground," Ball and his colleagues point to some of the reasons why we need to be quite cautious here. As they document, in these situations educational principles and values are often compromised such that commercial issues become more important in curriculum design and resource allocation.²⁸ For instance, the coupling of markets with the demand for and publication of performance indicators such as "examination league tables" in England has meant that schools are increasingly

looking for ways to attract "motivated" parents with "able" children. In this way, schools are able to enhance their relative position in local systems of competition. This represents a subtle, but crucial shift in emphasis—one that is not openly discussed as often as it should be—from student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school. This is also accompanied too uncomfortably often by a shift of resources away from students who are labeled as having special needs or learning difficulties, with some of these needed resources now being shifted to marketing and public relations. "Special needs" students not only are expensive, but also deflate test scores on those all important league tables.

Not only does this make it difficult to "manage public impressions," but it also makes it difficult to attract the "best" and most academically talented teachers.²⁹ The entire enterprise does, however, establish a new metric and a new set of goals based on a constant striving to win the market game. What this means is of considerable import, not only in terms of its effects on daily school life but in the ways all of this signifies a transformation of what counts as a good society and a responsible citizen. Let me say something about this generally.

I noted earlier that behind all educational proposals are visions of a just society and a good student. The neoliberal reforms I have been discussing construct this in a particular way. While the defining characteristic of neoliberalism is largely based on the central tenets of classical liberalism, in particular classic economic liberalism, there are crucial differences between classical liberalism and neoliberalism. These differences are absolutely essential in understanding the politics of education and the transformations education is currently undergoing. Mark Olssen clearly details these differences in the following passage. It is worth quoting in its entirety.

Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neo-liberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing

itive, results. Mechanisms, hence, must be put into place that give evidence of entrepreneurial efficiency and effectiveness. This coupling of markets and mechanisms for the generation of evidence of performance is exactly what has occurred. Whether it works is open to question. Indeed, as I shall show shortly, in practice neoliberal policies involving market "solutions" may actually serve to reproduce—not subvert—traditional hierarchies of class and race. Perhaps this should give us reason to pause?²³

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Of course, it needs to be said that working-class, poor, and/or immigrant parents are not skill-less in this regard, by any means. (After all, it requires an immense amount of skill, courage, and social and cultural resources to survive under exploitative and depressing material conditions. Thus, collective bonds, informal networks and contacts, and an ability to work the system are developed in quite nuanced, intelligent, and often impressive ways here.)³⁵ However, the match between the historically grounded habitus expected in schools and in its actors and those of more affluent parents, combined with the material resources available to more affluent parents, usually leads to a successful conversion of economic and social capital into cultural capital.³⁶ And this is exactly what is happening in England and elsewhere.

These claims both about what is happening inside of schools and about larger sets of power relations are supported by even more recent synthetic analyses of the overall results of marketized models. This research on the effects of the tense but still effective combination of neoliberal and neoconservative policies examines the tendencies internationally by comparing what has happened in a number of nations—for example, the United States, England and Wales, Australia, and New Zealand—where this combination has been increasingly powerful. The results confirm the arguments I have made here. Let me rehearse some of the most significant and disturbing findings of such research.

It is unfortunately all too usual that the most widely used measures of the "success" of school reforms are the results of standardized achievement tests. This simply will not do. We need to constantly ask what reforms do to schools as a whole and to each of their participants, including teachers, students, administrators, community members, local activists, and so on. To take one set of examples, as marketized "self-managing" schools grow in many nations, the role of the school principal is radically transformed. More, not less, power is actually consolidated within an administrative structure. More time and energy is spent on maintaining or enhancing a public image of a "good school" and less time and energy is spent on pedagogic and curricular substance. At the same time, teachers seem to be experiencing not increased autonomy

and professionalism, but intensification.³⁷ And, oddly, as noted before, schools themselves become more *similar*, and more committed, to standard, traditional, whole-class methods of teaching and a standard and traditional (and often monocultural) curriculum.³⁸ Only directing our attention to test scores would cause us to miss some truly profound transformations, many of which we may find disquieting.

One of the reasons these broader effects are so often produced is that in all too many countries, neoliberal visions of quasi markets are usually accompanied by neoconservative pressure to regulate content and behavior through such things as national curricula, national standards, and national systems of assessment. The combination is historically contingent; that is, it is not absolutely necessary that the two emphases are combined. But neoliberalism has characteristics that make it more likely that an emphasis on the weak state and a faith in markets will cohere with an emphasis on the strong state and a commitment to regulating knowledge, values, and the body.

This is partly the case because of the increasing power of the "evaluative state" and the members of the managerial and professional middle class who tend to populate it. This signifies what initially may seem to be contradictory tendencies. At the same time as the state appears to be devolving power to individuals and autonomous institutions that are themselves increasingly competing in a market, the state remains strong in key areas.³⁹ As I claimed earlier, one of the key differences between classical liberalism and its faith in "enterprising individuals" in a market and current forms of neoliberalism is the latter's commitment to a regulatory state. Neoliberalism does indeed demand the constant production of evidence that one is in fact "making an enterprise of oneself."⁴⁰ Thus, under these conditions not only does education become a marketable commodity like bread and cars in which the values, procedures, and metaphors of business dominate, but its results must be reducible to standardized "performance indicators."⁴¹ This is ideally suited to the task of providing a mechanism for the neoconservative attempts to specify what knowledge, values, and behaviors should be standardized and officially defined as "legitimate," a point I expand upon in the next section of this chapter.

In essence, we are witnessing a process in which the state shifts the blame for the very evident inequalities in access and outcome it has promised to reduce, from itself onto individual schools, parents, and children. This is, of course, also part of a larger process in which dominant economic groups shift the blame for the massive and unequal effects of their own misguided decisions from themselves onto the state. The state is then faced with a very real crisis in legitimacy. Given this, we should not be at all surprised that the state will then seek to export this crisis outside itself.⁴²

Of course, the state is not only classed but inherently *sex/gendered* and *racial* as well.⁴³ This is evident in Whitty, Power, and Halpin's arguments. They point to the gendered nature of the ways in which the management of schools is thought about, as "masculinist" business models become increasingly dominant.⁴⁴ While there is a danger of these claims degenerating into reductive and essentializing arguments, there is a good deal of insight here. They do cohere with the work of other scholars inside and outside of education who recognize that the ways in which our very definitions of public and private, of what knowledge is of most worth, and of how institutions should be thought about and run are fully implicated in the gendered nature of this society.⁴⁵ These broad ideological effects—for example, enabling a coalition between neoliberals and neoconservatives to be formed; expanding the discourses and practices of new middle-class managerialism; the masculinization of theories, policies, and management talk—are of considerable import and make it harder to change common-sense in more critical directions. Other, more proximate, effects inside schools are equally striking. For instance, even though principals seem to have more local power in these supposedly decentralized schools, because of the cementing in of neoconservative policies principals "are increasingly forced into a position in which they have to demonstrate performance along centrally prescribed curricula in a context in which they have diminishing control."⁴⁶ Because of the intensification that I mentioned before, both principals and teachers experience considerably heavier workloads and ever-escalating de-

mands for accountability, a never-ending schedule of meetings, and in many cases a growing scarcity of resources both emotional and physical.⁴⁷

Further, as in the research in England, in nearly all of the countries studied the market did *not* encourage diversity in curriculum, pedagogy, organization, clientele, or even image. It instead consistently devalued alternatives and increased the power of dominant models. Of equal significance, it also consistently exacerbated differences in access and outcome based on race, ethnicity, and class.⁴⁸

The return to "traditionalism" led to a number of things. It *delegitimized* more critical models of teaching and learning, a point that is crucial to recognize in any attempt to think through the possibilities of cultural struggles and critical pedagogies in schools. It both reintroduced rearticulation within the school and lessened the possibility that de-tracking would occur. More emphasis was given to "gifted" children and "fast track" classes, while students who were seen as less academically able were therefore "less attractive." In England, the extent of this was nowhere more visible than in the alarming rate of students being excluded from schools. Much of this was caused by the intense pressure to constantly demonstrate higher achievement rates. This was especially powerful in marketized contexts in which the "main driving force appeared to be *commercial* rather than *educational*."⁴⁹

In their own analysis of these worrisome and more hidden results, Whitty, Power, and Halpin and others demonstrate that among the dangerous effects of quasi markets are the ways in which schools that wish to maintain or enhance their market position engage in "cream-skimming," ensuring that *particular* kinds of students with particular characteristics are accepted and particular kinds of students are found wanting. For some schools, stereotypes were reproduced in that girls were seen as more valuable, as were students from some Asian communities. Afro-Caribbean children were often clear losers in this situation.⁵⁰

So far I have focused largely on England. Yet, as I mentioned in my introductory points, these movements are truly global. Their logics have spread rapidly to many nations, with results that tend to mirror those I

have discussed so far. The case of New Zealand is useful here, especially since a large percentage of the population of New Zealand is multiethnic, and the nation has a history of racial tensions and inequalities. Furthermore, the move toward New Right policies occurred faster there than elsewhere. In essence, New Zealand became the laboratory for many of the policies I am analyzing. In their exceptional study, based in large part on a conceptual apparatus influenced by Pierre Bourdieu, Lauder and Hughes document that educational markets seem to lead to an overall decline in educational standards. Paradoxically, they have a negative, not a positive, effect on the performance of schools with large working-class and minority populations. In essence, they "trade off the opportunities and minority children to those already privileged."⁵¹ The combination of neoliberal policies of marketization and the neoconservative emphasis on "tougher standards," about which I say more in the next section, creates an even more dangerous set of conditions. Lauder and Hughes's analysis confirms the conceptual and empirical arguments of Ball, Brown, and others that markets in education are not only responses by capital to reduce both the sphere of the state and of public control. They are also part of an attempt by the middle class to alter the rules of competition in education in light of the increased insecurities their children face. "By changing the process of selection to schools, middle class parents can raise the stakes in creating stronger mechanisms of exclusion for blue collar and post-colonial peoples in their struggle for equality of opportunity."⁵² The results from New Zealand not only mirror what was found elsewhere, but also demonstrate that the further one's practices follow the logics of action embodied in marketizing principles, the worse the situation tends to get. Markets *systematically* privilege families with higher socioeconomic status (SES) through their knowledge and material resources. These are the families who are most likely to exercise choice. Rather than giving large numbers of students who are working class, poor, or of color the ability to exit, it is largely higher SES families who exit from public schools and schools with mixed populations. In a situation of increased competition, this in turn produces a spiral of decline in which schools populated by poorer students and students of color are

again systematically disadvantaged and schools with higher SES and higher white populations are able to insulate themselves from the effects of market competition.⁵³ "White flight" then enhances the relative status of those schools already advantaged by larger economic forces; schooling for the "Other" becomes even more polarized and continues a downward spiral.⁵⁴

Having said this, however, we need to be cautious not to ignore historical specificities. Social movements, existing ideological formations, and institutions in civil society and the state may provide some support for countervailing logics. In some cases, in those nations with stronger and more extensive histories of social democratic policies and visions of collective positive freedoms, the neoliberal emphasis on the market has been significantly mediated. Hence, as Petter Aasen has demonstrated in Norway and Sweden, for instance, privatizing initiatives in education have had to cope with a greater collective commitment than in, say, the United States, England, and New Zealand.⁵⁵ However, these commitments partly rest on class relations. They are weakened when racial dynamics enter in. Thus, for example, the sense of "everyone being the same" and hence being all subject to similar collective sensibilities is challenged by the growth of immigrant populations from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Greater sympathy for marketized forms may arise once the commonly understood assumptions of what it means to be, say, Norwegian or Swedish are interrupted by populations of color who now claim the status of national citizenship. For this reason, it may be the case that the collective sensibilities that provide support for less market oriented policies are based on an unacknowledged *racial contract* that underpins the ideological foundations of a national "imagined community."⁵⁶ This, then, may also generate support for neoconservative policies, not because of neoliberalism's commitment to "perpetual responsiveness," but rather as a form of cultural restoration, as a way of reestablishing an imagined past when "we were all one." Because of this, it is important that any analysis of the current play of forces surrounding conservative modernization is aware of the fact that not only are such movements in constant motion, but once again we need to remember that they have a multitude

of intersecting and contradictory dynamics including not only class, but race and gender as well.⁵⁷

Most of the data I have drawn upon come from schools outside the United States, although they should make us stop dead in our tracks and give some very serious thought to whether we want to proceed with similar policies here. Yet the United States still sits at the center of much of the discussion in this literature. For example, charter schools and their equivalents in the United States and England are also put under critical scrutiny. In both places, while we need to be careful not to overstate this, they tend to attract parents who live and work in relatively privileged communities. Here, too, "it would appear that any new opportunities are being colonized by the already advantaged, rather than the 'losers' identified by Chubb and Moe."⁵⁸

In the process, this critical research suggests that there are hidden similarities between advocates of school effectiveness research and those committed to neoliberal "reforms." Both tend to ignore the fact that external characteristics of schools such as poverty, political and economic power, and so on consistently account for much more of the variation in school performance than things like organizational features or those characteristics that supposedly guarantee an "effective school."⁵⁹

The overall conclusions are clear. "[In] current circumstances choice is as likely to reinforce hierarchies as to improve educational opportunities and the overall quality of schooling."⁶⁰ As Whitty, Power, and Halpin put it in their arguments against those who believe that what we are witnessing in the emergence of "choice" programs is the postmodern celebration of difference:

There is a growing body of empirical evidence that, rather than benefiting the disadvantaged, the emphasis on parental choice and school autonomy further disadvantaging those least able to compete in the market. . . . In most disadvantaged groups, as opposed to the few individuals who escape from schools at the bottom of the status hierarchy, the new arrangements seem to be just a more sophisticated way of reproducing traditional distinctions between different types of school and the people who attend them.

All of this critical information gives us ample reason to repeat Henig's insightful argument I quoted in the previous chapter that "the sad irony of the current education-reform movement is that, through over-identification with school-choice proposals rooted in market-based ideas, the healthy impulse to consider radical reforms to address social problems may be channelled into initiatives that further erode the potential for collective deliberation and collective response."⁶²

This is not to dismiss either the possibility or necessity of school reform. However, we need to take seriously the probability that only by focusing on the exogenous socioeconomic features, not simply the organizational features, of "successful" schools can all schools succeed. Eliminating poverty through greater income parity; establishing effective and much more equal health and housing programs, and positively refusing to continue the hidden and not so hidden politics of racial exclusion and degradation that so clearly still characterize daily life in many nations (and in which marketized plans need to be seen as partly a structure to avoid the body and culture of the Other)—only by tackling these issues together can substantive progress be made. Unless discussions of critical pedagogy are themselves grounded in a recognition of these realities, they too may fall into the trap of assuming that schools can do it alone.

These empirical findings are made more understandable in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the relative weight given to cultural capital as part of mobility strategies today.⁶³ The rise in importance of cultural capital infiltrates all institutions in such a way that there is a relative movement away from the *direct* reproduction of class privilege (where power is transmitted largely within families through economic property) to *school-mediated* forms of class privilege. Here, "the bequeathal of privilege is simultaneously effectuated and transfigured by the intercession of educational institutions."⁶⁴ This is *not* a conspiracy; it is not "conscious" in the ways we normally use that concept. Rather it is the result of a long chain of relatively autonomous connections between differentially accumulated economic, social, and cultural capital operating at the level of daily events as we make our respective ways in the world, including as we saw in the world of school choice.

Thus, while not taking an unyieldingly determinist position, Bourdieu argues that a class habitus tends to reproduce the conditions of its own reproduction "unconsciously." It does this by producing a relatively coherent and systematically *characteristic* set of seemingly natural and unconscious strategies—in essence, ways of understanding and acting on the world that act as forms of cultural capital that can be and are employed to protect and enhance one's status in a social field of power. He aptly compares this similarity of habitus across class actors to handwriting:

Just as the acquired disposition we call "handwriting," that is a particular way of forming letters, always produces the same "writing"—that is, graphic lines that despite differences in size, matter, and color related to writing surface (sheet of paper or blackboard) and implement (pencil, pen, or chalk), that is despite differences in vehicles for the action, have an immediately recognizable affinity of style or a family resemblance—the practices of a single agent, or, more broadly, the practices of all agents endowed with similar habitus, owe the affinity of style that makes each a metaphor for the others to the fact that they are the products of the implementation in different fields of the same schemata of perception, thought, and action.⁶⁵

This very connection of habitus across fields of power—the ease of bringing one's economic, social, and cultural resources to bear on "markets"—enables a comfort between markets and self that characterizes the middle-class actor here. This constantly *produces* differential effects. These effects are not neutral, no matter what the advocates of neoliberalism suggest. Rather, they are themselves the results of a particular kind of morality. Unlike the conditions of what might best be called "thick morality" where principles of the common good are the ethical basis for adjudicating policies and practices, markets are grounded in aggregative principles. They are constituted out of the sum of individual goods and choices. "Founded on individual and property rights that enable citizens to address problems of interdependence via exchange," they offer a prime example of "thin morality" by generating both hierarchy and division

based on competitive individualism.⁶⁶ And in this competition, the general outline of the winners and losers *has* been identified empirically.

NATIONAL STANDARDS, NATIONAL CURRICULUM, AND NATIONAL TESTING

I showed in the previous section that there are connections between at least two dynamics operating in neoliberal reforms, "free" markets and increased surveillance. This can be seen in the fact that in many contexts, marketization has been accompanied by a set of particular policies for "producers," for those professionals working within education. These policies have been strongly regulatory and have been quite instrumental in reconstituting common-sense. As in the case of the linkage between national tests and performance indicators published as league tables, they have been organized around a concern for external supervision, regulation, and external judgment of performance⁶⁷ and have increasingly been colonized by parents who possess what is seen as "appropriate" economic, social, and cultural capital. This concern for external supervision and regulation is not only connected with a strong mistrust of "producers" (e.g., teachers) and to the need for ensuring that people continually make enterprises out of themselves. It is also clearly linked both to the neoconservative sense of a need to "return" to a lost past of high standards, discipline, awe, and "real" knowledge and to the professional middle-class' own ability to carve out a sphere of authority within the state for its own commitment to management techniques and efficiency. The focus on efficient management plays a prime role here, one that many neoliberals and neoconservatives alike find useful.

A shift has occurred in the relationship between the state and "professionals." In essence, the move toward a small strong state that is increasingly guided by market needs seems inevitably to bring with it reduced professional power and status.⁶⁸ Managerialism takes center stage here. Managerialism is largely charged with "bringing about the cultural transformation that shifts professional identities in order to make them

more responsive to client demand and external judgement." It aims to justify and to have people internalize fundamental alterations in professional practices. It both harnesses energy and discourages dissent.⁶⁹

There is no necessary contradiction between a general set of marketing and deregulating interests and processes—such as voucher and choice plans—and a set of enhanced regulatory processes—such as plans for national or state standards, curricula, and testing.⁷⁰ "The regulatory form permits the state to maintain 'steerage' over the aims and processes of education from within the market mechanism."⁷¹ Such "steerage at a distance" has often been vested in such things as national standards, national curricula, and national testing. Forms of all of these are being pushed for in the United States both at national and state levels currently and are the subject of considerable controversy, some of which cuts across ideological lines and shows some of the tensions within the different elements contained under the umbrella of conservative modernization.

I have argued that paradoxically a national curriculum and especially a national testing program are the first and most essential steps toward increased marketization. They actually provide the mechanisms for comparative data that "consumers" need to make markets work as markets.⁷² Absent these mechanisms, there is no comparative base of information for "choice." Yet we do not have to argue about these regulatory forms in a vacuum. Like the neoliberal markets I discussed in the previous section, they too have been instituted in England; and, once again, important research is available that can and must make us duly cautious in going down this path.

One might want to claim that a set of national or state standards, national or state curricula, and national or state tests would provide the conditions for thick morality. After all, such regulatory reforms are supposedly based on shared values and common sentiments that also create social spaces in which common issues of concern can be debated and made subject to moral interrogation.⁷³ Yet what counts as the "common," and how and by whom it is actually determined, is rather more thin than thick.

Although the national curriculum now so solidly in place in England and Wales is clearly prescriptive, it has not always proven to be the kind of straitjacket it has often been made out to be. As several researchers have documented, it is not only possible that policies and legislative mandates are interpreted and adapted, but it seems inevitable. Thus, the national curriculum is "not so much being 'implemented' in schools as being 'recreated,' not so much 'reproduced,' as 'produced'."⁷⁴

In general, it is nearly a truism that there is no simplistic linear model of policy formation, distribution, and implementation. Complex mediations always occur at each level of the process. A complex politics goes on within each group and between these groups and external forces in the formulation of policy, in its being written up as a legislative mandate, in its distribution, and in its reception at the level of practice.⁷⁵ Thus, the state may legislate changes in curriculum, evaluation, or policy (which is itself produced through conflict, compromise, and political maneuvering), but policy writers and curriculum writers may be unable to control the meanings and implementations of their texts. All texts are "leaky" documents. They are subject to "recontextualization" at every stage of the process.⁷⁶

However, this general principle may be just a bit too romantic. None of this occurs on a level playing field. As with market plans, there are very real differences in power in one's ability to influence, mediate, transform, or reject a policy or a regulatory process. Granted, it is important to recognize that a "state control model"—with its assumption of top-down linearity—is much too simplistic and that the possibility of human agency and influence is always there. However, having said this, this should not imply that such agency and influence will be powerful.⁷⁷

The case of national curriculum and national testing in England and Wales documents the tensions in these two accounts. The national curriculum that was first legislated and then imposed there was indeed struggled over. It was originally too detailed and too specific and, hence, was subject to major transformations at the national, community, school, and then classroom levels. However, even though the national curriculum was subject to conflict, mediation, and some transformation of its

content, organization, and invasive and immensely time consuming forms of evaluation, its utter power is demonstrated in its radical re-configuration of the very process of knowledge selection, organization, and assessment. It changed the entire terrain of education radically. Its subject divisions "provide more constraint than scope for discretion." The "standard attainment targets" that have been mandated cement these constraints in place. "The imposition of national testing locks the national curriculum in place as the dominant framework of teachers' work whatever opportunities teachers may take to evade or reshape it."⁷⁸

Thus, it is not sufficient to state that the world of education is complex and has multiple influences. The purpose of any serious analysis is to go beyond such overly broad conclusions. Rather, we need to "discriminate degrees of influence in the world," to weigh the relative efficacy of the factors involved. Hence, although it is clear that while the national curriculum and national tests that now exist in England and Wales have come about because of a complex interplay of forces and influences, it is equally clear that "state control has the upper hand."⁷⁹

The national curricula and national tests *did* generate conflict about issues. They did partly lead to the creation of social spaces for moral questions to get asked. (Of course, these moral questions had been asked all along by dispossessed groups.) Thus, it was clear to many people that the creation of mandatory and reductive tests that emphasized memory and decontextualized abstraction pulled the national curriculum in a particular direction—that of encouraging a selective educational market in which elite students and elite schools with a wide range of resources would be well (if narrowly) served.⁸⁰ Diverse groups of people argued that such reductive, detailed, and simplistic paper-and-pencil tests "had the potential to do enormous damage," a situation that was made even worse because the tests were so onerous in terms of time and record keeping. Teachers had a good deal of support when as a group they decided to boycott the administration of the test in a remarkable act of public protest. This also led to serious questioning of the arbitrary, inflexible, and overly prescriptive national curriculum. While the curriculum is still inherently problematic and the assessment system does still contain nu-

merous dangerous and onerous elements within it, organized activity against them did have an impact.⁸¹

Yet, unfortunately, the story does not end there. By the mid-1990s, even with the government's partial retreat on such regulatory forms as its program of constant and reductive testing, it had become clearer by the year that the development of testing and the specification of content had been "hijacked" by those who were ideologically committed to traditional pedagogies and to the idea of more rigorous selection.⁸² The residual effects are both material and ideological. They include a continuing emphasis on trying to provide the "rigor [that is] missing in the practice of most teachers, . . . judging progress solely by what is testable in tests of this kind" and the development of a "very hostile view of the accountability of teachers" that was seen as "part of a wider thrust of policy to take away professional control of public services and establish so called consumer control through a market structure."⁸³

The authors of an extremely thorough review of recent assessment programs instituted in England and Wales provide a summary of what has happened. Gipps and Murphy argue that it has become increasingly obvious that the national assessment program attached to the national curriculum is more and more dominated by traditional models of testing and the assumptions about teaching and learning that lie behind them. At the same time, equity issues are becoming much less visible. In the calculus of values now in place in the regulatory state, efficiency, speed, and cost control replace more substantive concerns about social and educational justice. The pressure to get tests in place rapidly has meant that "the speed of test development is so great, and the curriculum and assessment changes so regular, that [there is] little time to carry out detailed analyses and trialing to ensure that the tests are as fair as possible to all groups."⁸⁴ Echoes of these very same effects are seen throughout major cities in the United States as well. The conditions for "thin morality"—in which the competitive individual of the market dominates and social justice will somehow take care of itself—are reproduced here. The combination of the neoliberal market and the regulatory state, then, does indeed "work." However, it works in ways in

which the metaphors of free market, merit, and effort hide the differential reality that is produced. While on the one hand this makes a socially and culturally critical pedagogy even more essential, it also makes it much more difficult to actually accomplish.

Basil Bernstein's discussion of the general principles by which knowledge and policies ("texts") move from one arena to another is useful in understanding this. As Bernstein reminds us, when talking about educational change, we must be concerned with three fields. Each field has its own rules of access, regulation, privilege, and special interests: (1) the field of "production" where new knowledge is constructed; (2) the field of "reproduction" where pedagogy and curriculum are actually enacted in schools; and, between these other two, (3) the "recontextualizing" field where discourses from the field of production are appropriated and then transformed into pedagogic discourse and recommendations.⁸⁵ This appropriation and recontextualization of knowledge for educational purposes is itself governed by two sets of principles. The first—delocalization—implies that there is always a *selective* appropriation of knowledge and discourse from the field of production. The second—relocation—points to the fact that when knowledge and discourse from the field of production is pulled within the recontextualizing field, it is subject to ideological transformations due to the various specialized and/or political interests whose conflicts structure the recontextualizing field.⁸⁶

A good example of this, one that confirms Gipps and Murphy's analysis of the dynamics of national curricula and national testing during their more recent iterations, is found in the process by which the content and organization of the mandated national curriculum in physical education were struggled over and ultimately formed in England. In this instance, a working group of academics both within and outside the field of physical education, headmasters of private and state-supported schools, well-known athletes, and business leaders (but *no* teachers) was formed.

The original curriculum policies that arose from the group were relatively mixed educationally and ideologically, taking account of the field

of production of knowledge within physical education. That is, they contained both critical and progressive elements and elements of the conservative restoration, as well as academic perspectives within the specialized fields from the university. However, as these policies made their way from report to recommendations and then from recommendations to action, they steadily came closer to restorational principles. An emphasis on efficiency, basic skills and performance testing, on the social control of the body, and on competitive norms ultimately won out. Like the middle-class capturing of the market discussed earlier, this too was not a conspiracy. Rather, it was the result of a process of "overdetermination." That is, it was not due to an imposition of these norms, but to a combination of interests in the recontextualizing field—an economic context in which public spending was under severe scrutiny and cost savings had to be sought everywhere; government officials who were opposed to "fills" and consistently intervened to institute only a selection of the recommendations (conservative ones that did *not* come from "professional academics" preferably); ideological attacks on critical, progressive, or child-centered approaches to physical education; and a predominant discourse of "being pragmatic." These came together in the recontextualizing field and helped ensure in practice that conservative principles would be reinscribed in policies and mandates, and that critical forms were seen as too ideological, too costly, or too impractical.⁸⁷ "Standards" were upheld; critical voices were heard, but ultimately to little effect; the norms of competitive performance were made central and employed as regulatory devices. Regulatory devices served to privilege specific groups in much the same way as did markers. If this is the case in physical education, it is not hard to predict what is happening and will happen in those curriculum areas that are socially defined as even higher status, and where the stakes seem higher as well.

But it is important not to leave our discussion at such an abstract level or at the level of curriculum planning. What has happened in schools themselves in the United States and elsewhere when such "pragmatic" standards, curricula, and tests are actually instituted?

CREATING EDUCATIONAL TRIAGE

Analyses here in the United States have begun to document similar kinds of effects.⁸⁸ However, unfortunately, the predominance of relatively unreflective and at times almost self-congratulatory policies around markers, standards, testing, and reductive forms of accountability is exactly that here—predominant. Even given the exceptional work that is being done, for example, by Jeannie Oakes, Amy Stuart Wells, and others on the hidden effects of some of these kinds of policies and practices, and even given the fact that there are numerous examples of extremely effective schools in our urban and rural areas that succeed through using much more democratic and critical models of curriculum, teaching, and evaluation,⁸⁹ it still feels as if one has to constantly swim against the tide of conservative modernization.

Given this state of affairs, it is now even more important that we pay attention to material that demonstrates what can happen in situations where the stress on higher standards and higher test scores hits both the realities of schools and the different populations they serve. David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell's volume *Rationing Education* is just such a book.⁹⁰ It goes into even more detail about the powerful, and often damaging, effects on teachers and students of our seeming fascination with ever-rising standards, mandated curricula, and overemphasis on testing. The volume is based on in-depth research on the equivalent of middle and secondary schools in England. It details the overt and hidden effects of policies that are currently being undertaken in the United States as well. These include such things as creating a situation where the tail of a high-stakes test "wags the dog" of the teacher, pressuring schools to constantly show increased achievement scores on such standardized tests no matter what the level of support or the impoverished conditions in schools and local communities, to publicly display such results in a process of what might be realistically called shaming, and to threaten schools that do not show "improvement" on these tests with severe sanctions or loss of control. Of course, there are poor schools and there are ineffective practices in schools. However, the reduction of education to scores on what are

often inadequate measures, often used in technically and educationally inappropriate ways for comparative purposes, has some serious consequences. What these consequences are provides the context for the story Gillborn and Youdell tell.

In many ways, *Rationing Education* provides what might be called a microeconomy of school life. It examines the ways in which certain valued commodities are accumulated by schools in a time of intense competition for scarce resources. In this case, the commodities are higher test scores and the resources are both numbers of students and public recognition of being a "good" school. The authors' way of describing this is what they call the "A-C economy."

In England, as in the United States, schools exist in what is really a hierarchical ordering, a market, in prestige and reputation. They are valued by the number of students who get passing scores on particular national tests. The national tests are made public as a form of "league tables" in which schools are rank-ordered according to their relative results. Schools with large numbers of students getting grades A-C are more highly valued than those with students whose rates of passing are less—even though everyone tacitly knows that there is a very strong relationship between school results and poverty. (We need again to remember in the United States, for example, that poverty explains *much* more of the variance in school achievement than any school reform.)

This is straightforward and not surprising. However, this situation creates an economy that has certain characteristics. Students with predicted higher test scores are even more valuable. Students with predicted lower test scores are seen as less useful to the school's place in the market. This too is not surprising. The results of such an economy, however, are powerful. Another key group of students is focused upon and on whom considerable resources, energy, and attention are devoted—students who are on the border between passing grades and failing grades. These students—often seen as middle-class "underachievers"—become objects of great value in the school. After all, if this key group can be pulled across the border into the A-C column, the school's results will be that much more positive.

What could be wrong with an increased focus on students on the border? Here is one of the places where Gillborn and Youdell's results are ominous. In such an A-C economy, specific students are seen as movable. Other students' abilities are seen as increasingly fixed and less worthy of attention. The class and race characteristics of these latter students are striking. Poor and working-class students, students of African descent, and other ethnically "different" children are not valued commodities on this kind of market. Even though gender divisions were less pronounced in the schools that Gillborn and Youdell studied, divisions strongly rooted in racializing and class-based structures were not simply mirrored in the schools. They actually were *produced* in these institutions.

Thus, policies that were put in place to raise standards, to increase test scores, to guarantee public accountability, and to make schools more competitive had results that were more than a little damaging to those students who were already the least advantaged in these same schools. Yet it was not only the students who witnessed these negative effects. The voices of teachers and administrators indicate what happens to them as well. They too begin to harden their sense of which students are "able" and which students are not. Tracking returns in both overt and covert ways. And once again, black students and students in government-subsidized lunch programs are the ones most likely to be placed in those tracks or given academic and career advice that nearly guarantees that they will have limited or no mobility and will confirm their status as students who are "less worthy."

Equally worth noting here is the specific way the A-C economy works to choose those students who are deemed to have worthiness. Often, students whose behavior and test results are quite similar have very different careers in the school. Thus, a black student and a white student may be, say, on the border of the A-C/failing divide, but the black student will not be the beneficiary of the added attention. These situations are all too often characterized by tacitly operating visions of ability, ones that have been hardened by years of discourse on the "problem" of black student achievement and especially by the increased visibility

once again of supposedly scientific (and ultimately racist and empirically problematic) "research" on genetic differences in mean intelligence between blacks and whites. As I noted, not only would no reputable population geneticist make such a claim, but these theories have been discredited multiple times.⁹¹ The fact that they reenter into our common-sense decision-making in schools in times of scarce resources and increased pressure shows how deeply seated such preconceived notions are in the sets of assumptions educators may unconsciously mobilize in their attempt to be pragmatic in dealing with large numbers of students.

As previous research has clearly indicated, students are not passive in the face of these tendencies. Indeed, as Gillborn and Youdell show, students "interpret, question, and on occasion, resist." However, "the scope for resistance is severely constrained, and pupils are clearly positioned as the subject of numerous organizational and disciplinary discourses in which the young people themselves play little active role."⁹² In what is perhaps one of the most powerful messages of the book, the authors summarize the effects of this entire process in the following way: "It is a cruel irony that the processes of selection and monitoring that have been adopted with the aim of heightening attainment are so frequently experienced as disempowering and demotivating by the students."⁹³ These experiences are turned into feelings of being treated unfairly, of teachers and schools being organized in ways that privilege the already privileged in terms of class and race. If this is the case, some of the most powerful messages "reforms" of this type may send is that not only is the world deeply unfair but also that schools themselves are prime examples of institutions that simply respond to those who already possess economic and cultural capital. This is decidedly *not* the message that any society that is serious about what might be called thick democracy wants to teach. But it may be what our children, including many like Joseph, learn in school systems that are so driven by the assumption that putting into place higher standards and higher-stakes testing will somehow magically solve deep-seated educational and social problems. A close reading of *Rationing Education* should make us much more cautious about such unwarranted assumptions.

Unfortunately, recent research on the effects of all the preceding issues in the United States confirms these worries. Linda McNeil's powerful and detailed investigation of what has actually happened in Texas when state-mandated "reforms" involving imposed standards and curricula, reductive and competitive testing, and attacks on teachers' professionalism were instituted demonstrates in no uncertain terms that the very children and schools that these policies and practices are supposed to help are actually hurt in the process.⁹⁴ Similar tendencies toward producing inequalities have been documented in the conservative modernization reforms in tax credits, testing, and curricula in Arizona and elsewhere.⁹⁵ Thus goeth democracy in education.

THINKING STRATEGICALLY

In this chapter, I have raised serious questions about current educational "reform" efforts now under way in a number of nations. I have used research from England, New Zealand, the United States, and elsewhere to document some of the hidden differential effects of two connected strategies—neoliberal-inspired market proposals and neoliberal-, neo-conservative-, and middle-class-managerial-inspired regulatory proposals. Taking a key from Herbert Kliebard's historical analysis, I have described how different interests with different educational and social visions compete for dominion in the social field of power surrounding educational policy and practice. In the process, I have documented some of the complexities and imbalances in this field of power. These complexities and imbalances result in thin rather than thick morality and in the reproduction of both dominant pedagogical and curricular forms and ideologies and the social privileges that accompany them. I have suggested that the rhetorical flourishes of the discourses of critical pedagogy need to come to grips with these changing material and ideological conditions. Critical pedagogy cannot and will not occur in a vacuum. Unless we honestly face these profound rightist transformations and think tactically about them, we will have little effect either on

the creation of a counterhegemonic commonsense or on the building of a counterhegemonic alliance. The growth of that odd combination of marketization and regulatory state, the move toward pedagogic similarity and "traditional" academic curricula and teaching, the ability of dominant groups to exert leadership in the struggle over this, and the accompanying shifts in commonsense—all this cannot be wished away. Instead, it needs to be confronted honestly and self-critically.

Having said this, however, I want to point to a hidden paradox in what I have done. Even though much of my own and others' research recently has been on the processes and effects of conservative modernization, we should be aware of the dangers in such a focus. Research on the history, politics, and practices of rightist social and educational movements and "reforms" has enabled us to show the contradictions and unequal effects of such policies and practices. It has enabled the rearticulation of claims to social justice on the basis of solid evidence. This is all to the good. However, in the process, one of the latent effects has been the gradual framing of educational issues largely in terms of the conservative agenda. The very categories themselves—markets, choice, national curricula, national testing, standards—bring the debate onto the terrain established by neoliberals and neoconservatives. The analysis of "what is" has led to a neglect of "what might be." Thus, there has been a withering of substantive large-scale discussions of feasible alternatives to neoliberal and neoconservative visions, policies, and practices, ones that would move well beyond them.⁹⁶

Because of this, at least part of our task may be politically and conceptually complex, but it can be said simply. In the long term, we need to "develop a political project that is both local yet generalizable, systematic without making Eurocentric, masculinist claims to essential and universal truths about human subjects."⁹⁷ Another part of our task, though, must be and is more proximate, more appropriately educational. While I say more about this in my final chapter, defensible, articulate, and fully fleshed out alternative critical and progressive policies and practices in curriculum, teaching, and evaluation need to be developed and made widely available. But this too must be done with due recognition

of the changing nature of the social field of power and the importance of thinking tactically and strategically. Let me be specific here.

For example, in the United States the increasingly popular journal *Rethinking Schools* has provided an important forum for social and educational criticism and for descriptions of critical educational practices in schools and communities. At times influenced directly by the work of Paulo Freire and by educators who have themselves elaborated and extended it, and at other times coming out of diverse indigenous radical educational traditions specific to the United States, *Rethinking Schools* and emerging national organizations such as the National Coalition of Educational Activists have jointly constructed spaces for critical educators, cultural and political activists, radical scholars, and others to teach each other, to provide supportive criticism of one another's work, and to build a more collective set of responses to the destructive educational and social policies coming from the conservative restoration.⁹⁸

In using the phrase "collective responses," however, I need to stress that this phrase does not signify anything like "democratic centism" in which a small group or a party cadre speaks for the majority and establishes the "appropriate" position. Given that there are diverse emancipatory movements whose voices are heard in publications like *Rethinking Schools* and in organizations such as the National Coalition of Educational Activists—antiracist and postcolonial positions, radical forms of multiculturalism, gays and lesbians, multiple feminist voices, neo-Marxists and democratic socialists, "greens," and so on—a more appropriate way of looking at what is happening is to call it a *decentered unity*. Multiple progressive projects, multiple "critical pedagogies," are articulated. Like Freire, each of them is related to real struggles in real institutions in real communities. We of course should not be romantic about this. There are very real differences—political, epistemological, and/or educational—in these varied voices. But they are united in their opposition to the forces involved in the new conservative hegemonic alliance. There *are* tensions, but the decentered unity has remained strong enough for each constituent group to support the struggles of the others.

This is not all. At the same time as these critical movements are being built, critical educators are also attempting to occupy the spaces provided by existing "mainstream" publication outlets to publish books that provide *critical* answers to teachers' questions about "What do I do on Monday?" during a conservative era. This space has too long been ignored by many theorists of critical pedagogy. Some of these attempts have been remarkably successful. Let me give one example. One very large "professional" organization in the United States—the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)—publishes books that are distributed each year to its more than 150,000 members, most of whom are teachers or administrators in elementary, middle, or secondary schools. ASCD has not been a very progressive organization, preferring to publish largely technicist and overtly depoliticized material. Yet it has been concerned that its publications have not sufficiently represented socially and culturally critical educators. It, thus, has been looking for ways to increase its legitimacy to a wider range of educators. Because of this legitimacy problem and because of its large membership, it became clear to a number of people who were part of the critical educational traditions in the United States that it might be possible to convince ASCD to publish and widely circulate material that would demonstrate the actual *practical success* of critical models of curriculum, teaching, and evaluation in solving real problems in schools and communities, especially with working-class and poor children and children of color.

After intense negotiations that guaranteed an absence of censorship, a colleague of mine and I agreed to publish a book—*Democratic Schools*⁹⁹—with ASCD that provided clear practical examples of the power of Freirean and similar critical approaches at work in classrooms and communities. *Democratic Schools* was not only distributed to all 150,000 members of the organization, but it has gone on to sell an additional 100,000 copies. Thus, nearly 250,000 copies of a volume that tells the practical stories of the largely successful struggles of critically oriented educators in real schools are now in the hands of educators who daily face similar problems.¹⁰⁰ This is an important intervention. While there is no guarantee

It is *hard* work not to be sloppy. It is hard work to write in such a way that theoretical and political nuance are not sacrificed on the altar of commonsense, but also in a way that the hard work of reading can actually pay off for the reader her- or himself. And it is hard and time-consuming work to write at multiple levels. But if we don't, neoliberals and neoconservatives will. And we will be much the worse for it. In this time of conservative restoration, the multiple projects of critical education are indeed crucial. A good dose of reality will do no harm, and I believe will actually make them more effective in the long run.

Although populism can and has been a double-edged sword, being effective, then, requires a somewhat more populist set of impulses than those that have dominated critical pedagogy over the past years. However, the terrain out of which such populist forms grow is already being occupied by a very different kind of "popular" consciousness. Nearly all populisms are critical of elitist tendencies. Yet who and what actually counts as elitism is part of a contested terrain. Unfortunately, in part because the left has evacuated that terrain, the kinds of populism that are currently growing most rapidly are authoritarian in nature. While they do cohere around themes that are based on "plain speaking" and "letting the people decide," they are all too often based on assumptions that God has selected "the people" whose voices are more important than anyone else's. As I noted in Chapters 1 and 2, authoritarian populism is an increasingly powerful and persuasive social movement in many nations throughout the world. Its adherents have been integrated under the umbrella of conservative modernization also in part because neoliberals and neoconservatives have been able to tap into the strong undercurrents of populist resentment that exist among many segments of the (especially) white population. The right has understood Gramscian strategies—and has used them for retrogressive purposes. We shall now turn to the structures of the authoritarian populist world. No progressive counterhegemonic strategy, no critical pedagogy, can succeed unless it understands the reality constructed by these groups. I devote the next three chapters to their history; to their economic, political, and cultural arguments; and to their claims about educational policy and practice.

Chapter 4



Endangered Christianity

DARWIN, GOD, AND EVIL

To understand authoritarian populist religious conservatives, we have to go further than was done in my analysis of neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and the managerialism of the new middle class. We also need to think historically both about particular theological impulses and about the importance of how race, class, gender, and religious and regional relations interact over time. But this needs to be in such a way that the intersections and contradictions of these relations are not ignored. In this chapter, I focus largely on the historical genesis of such movements. In Chapter 5, I examine the ways in which all of the major elements within such conservative religious beliefs can make sense to their proponents, even when they seem repressive to an outsider. Then, in Chapter 6, I take one of the most powerful results of their anti-school sentiments—home schooling—and critically analyze its social, ideological, and educational impulses and a number of its hidden costs. However, it is important to remember at the outset of this section of the book Gramsci's admonition that there will be elements of good