Red Pedagogy: The Un-Methodology

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Ever since I received the invitation to write this chapter, I’ve been thinking (read: obsessing) about methodology, asking everyone I know how they define it and trying to determine whether I do it or not. Ironically, through these discussions, I discovered that the social engagement of ideas is my method. Specifically, I learned that my research is about ideas in motion. That is, ideas as they come alive within and through people(s), communities, events, texts, practices, policies, institutions, artistic expression, ceremonies, and rituals. I engage them “in motion” through a process of active and close observation wherein I live with, try on, and wrestle with ideas in a manner akin to Geertz’s (1998) notion of “deep hanging out” but without the distinction between participant/observer. Instead, the gaze is always shifting inward, outward, and throughout the spaces-in-between, with the idea itself holding ground as the independent variable. As I engage this process, I survey viewpoints on the genealogy of ideas, their representation and potential power to speak across boundaries, borders, and margins, and filter the gathered data through an indigenous perspective. When I say “indigenous perspective,” what I mean is my perspective as an indigenous scholar. And when I say “my perspective,” I mean from a consciousness shaped not only by my own experiences but also those of my peoples and ancestors. It is through this process that Red pedagogy—my indigenous methodology—emerged.

Introduction

When I think of indigenous methodologies, I think of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) classic text Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. This landmark publication defined the field of indigenous methodology, charting the path for those still navigating the deeply troubled waters of academic research. The historically turbulent relationship stems from centuries of use and abuse at the hands of Whitestream prospectors (read: academics), mining the dark bodies of indigenous peoples—either out of self-interest or self-hatred. Smith names the animosity directly, writing, “The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples. It is a history that offends the deepest sense of our humanity” (p. 1).

AUTHORS’ NOTE: Portions of this chapter come from my text, Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought (Grande, 2004).

This history of dehumanization raises significant questions for the indigenous scholar—presenting a kind of “Sophie’s Choice” moment where one feels compelled to choose between retaining his or her integrity (identity) as a Native person or doing research. What does it mean for indigenous scholars to claim the space of educational research? Does it signify a final submission to the siren’s song, seducing us into the colonialist abyss with promises of empowerment? Or is it the necessary first step in reclaiming and decolonizing an
intellectual space—an inquiry room—of our own? Such questions provoke beyond the bounds of academic exercise, suggesting instead the need for an academic exorcism.

In this case, the demon to be purged is the specter of colonialism. As indigenous scholars, we live within, against, and outside of its constant company, witnessing its various manifestations as it shape-shifts its way into everything from research and public policy to textbooks and classrooms. In other words, the colonial tax of Native scholars not only requires a renegotiation of personal identity but also an analysis of how whole nations get trans- or (dis)figured when articulated through Western frames of knowing. As Edward Said (1978) observes, “Institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” support the “Western discourse” (p. 2). Such an observation begs the question: Is it possible to engage the grammar of empire without replicating its effects?

At the same time indigenous scholars entertain these ruminations, Native communities continue to be affected and transformed by the forces of colonization, rendering the “choice” of whether to employ Western research methods in the process of defining indigenous methodologies essentially moot. By virtue of living in the Whitestream world, indigenous scholars have no choice but to negotiate the forces of colonialism, to learn, understand, and converse in the grammar of empire as well as develop the skills to contest it.

Such is the premise and promise of Red pedagogy. It is an indigenous pedagogy that operates at the crossroads of Western theory—specifically critical pedagogy—and indigenous knowledge. By bridging these epistemological worlds, Red pedagogy abandons what Robert Allen Warrior (1995) refers to as “the death dance of dependence,” that is, the vacillation between the wholesale adoption of Anglo-Western theories and stance that indigenous scholars need nothing outside of themselves or their communities to understand the world or their place within it. Specifically, Red pedagogy asks that as we examine our own communities, policies, and practices, that we take seriously the notion that knowing ourselves as revolutionary agents is more than an act of understanding who we are. It is an act of reinventing ourselves, of validating our overlapping cultural identifications and relating them to the materiality of social life and power relations (McLaren, 1997). To allow for the process of reinvention, it is important to understand that Red pedagogy is not a method or technique to be memorized, implemented, applied, or prescribed. Rather, it is space of engagement. It is the liminal and intellectual borderlands where indigenous and nonindigenous scholars encounter one another, working to remember, redefine, and reverse the devastation of the original colonialist “encounter.”

What follows is a framework for thinking about indigenous knowledge as it encounters critical pedagogy or Red pedagogy. It begins with a “statement of the problem” or a tracing of the historical disconnect between indigenous education and Western theory. This discussion is followed by an articulation of the basic principles of critical theory, specifically revolutionary critical theory and the possibilities it holds for indigenous theories of decolonization. While it is evident that revolutionary critical theory holds great promise, because it also retains core Western assumptions, it also stands in tension with those central to indigenous pedagogies. Specifically, the radical notion of “democratization” does not theorize the difference of indigenous sovereignty; revolutionary constructs of subjectivity remain tied to Western notions of citizenship, and insofar
as the discourse of revolutionary critical pedagogy is informed by Marxist theory, it retains a measure of anthropocentrism that belies indigenous views of land and “nature.” Each of these tensions will be examined more fully. Distilled from this analysis are seven precepts of Red pedagogy that are intended to serve as a point of departure for further discussion.

Statement of the Problem: The Historical Roots of Red Pedagogy

The miseducation of American Indians precedes the “birth” of this nation. Indeed, long before the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired, American education was being conceived as a foundational weapon in the arsenal of American imperialism. By the mid-18th century, Harvard University (1654), the College of William and Mary (1693), and Dartmouth College (1769) had all been established with the express purpose of “civilizing” and “Christianizing” Indians. Perhaps the most critical insight to siphon from this history is that the colonialist project was never simply about the desire to “civilize” or even deculturalize indigenous peoples. Rather, it was deliberately designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to indigenous resources. Thus, despite the tired characterization of the relationship between the United States and Indian tribes as one of cultural domination, the predominant relationship has been one of material exploitation: the forced extraction of labor and natural resources in the interest of capital gains.

Consider, for example, the Indian Removal Act (1830), Dawes Allotment (1887), and Termination Acts (1953)—all typically viewed as legislated attempts to destroy Indian culture, but in the end, each policy provided the federal government greater access to Indian lands and resources, proffering a healthy windfall in capital gains. Similarly, while manual labor and boarding schools attempted to extinguish Indian-ness by imposing culturally imperialistic practices, they also profited from child labor and the unwritten policy to establish a permanent Indian proletariat.

While it is important to recognize the progress that has been made since colonial times, it is also evident that the legacy of colonization persists. As a group, American Indian students are still the most disproportionately affected by poverty, low educational attainment, and limited access to educational opportunities (Beaulieu, 2000, p. 33). Moreover, Native students are among the students most often to be categorized and treated as remedial students, subjected to racial slurs, and hindered by low teacher expectations—all of which lead to extreme alienation (Butterfield, 1994; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). As a result, Native students exhibit the highest dropout rates, lowest academic performance rates, and lowest college admission and retention rates in the nation (American Council on Education, 2002).

In recognition of the seeming sociocultural nature of “the problem,” some educators have advocated multicultural education for American Indian students (Butterfield, 1994; Charleston & King, 1991; Reyhner, 1992; St. Germaine, 1995a, 1995b; Wilson, 1991). In particular, Native educators have stressed the role of culture and language, arguing that American Indian students “thrive at school when instruction is congruent with their culture, connected to their history, and consistent with their community’s worldview” (Sherman,
Among the principal advocates of a culturally based education (CBE) is indigenous educator William Demmert, who, along with John Towner, has defined the following six elements of CBE:

1. Recognition and use of Native languages
2. Pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural characteristics and adult-child interactions
3. Pedagogy in which teaching strategies are congruent with the traditional culture and ways of knowing and learning
4. Curriculum that is based on traditional culture and that recognizes the importance of Native spirituality
5. Strong Native community participation in educating children and in the planning and operation of school activities
6. Knowledge and use of the social and political mores of the community

While virtually no one would dispute the relevance of the above elements as being critical to the academic success of Native students, I maintain that unless educational reform also happens concurrently with an analysis of colonialism, it is bound to suffocate from the tentacles of imperialism. Moreover, in a time when 90% of American Indian students attend non-Indian schools (Gallagher, 2000), it is not only imperative for Native educators to insist on the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and praxis in school curricula but also to transform the institutional structures of schools themselves. In other words, indigenous educators need to theorize the ways in which power and domination inform the processes and procedures of schooling and develop pedagogies that disrupt their effects. Put simply, insofar as the project for colonialist education has been imbricated with the social, economic, and political policies of U.S. imperialism, an education for decolonization must also make no claim to political neutrality. Specifically, it must engage a method of analysis and social inquiry that troubles the capitalist, imperialist aims of unfettered competition, accumulation, and exploitation.

Historically, such systems of analysis have been the domain of critical theorists. Specifically, critical educators extend critiques of the social, economic, and political barriers to social justice as well as advocate for the transformation of schools along the imperatives of democracy. In so doing, they position schools as “sites of struggle” where the broader relations of power, domination, and authority are played out. In addition to their analyses of schools, critical educators theorize the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality as the fault lines of inequality. Within these analyses, they include the naming and examination of “Whiteness” as a significant marker of racial, class, and gender privilege. Finally, and perhaps most relevant to the concerns of indigenous education, proponents of “revolutionary” forms of critical pedagogy center their project in the transformation of capitalist social relations, recognizing that the attainment of real equity is impossible within the current imperialist system of economic exploitation. They take seriously the claims and struggles of colonized peoples by recognizing that movements against imperialism must begin with dismantling the “Eurocentric system of cultural valuation that rationalizes globalization as ‘development’ and ‘progress’” (Rizvi, 2002).

Despite its seeming relevance, indigenous scholars have had limited engagement with critical theories of
education. For the most part, they have concentrated on the social and political urgencies of their own communities. Against such immediate needs, engagement in abstract theory seems indulgent (a luxury and privilege of the academic elite), Eurocentric and thereby inherently contradictory to the aims of indigenous education.

Though this impulse is entirely rational, the lack of engagement with critical theory has ultimately limited possibilities for indigenous scholars to build broad-based coalitions and political solidarities. Particularly at a time when indigenous communities are under siege from the forces of global encroachment, such a limitation has serious implications. Communities either unable or unwilling to extend borders of coalition and enact transcendent theories of decolonization will only compound their vulnerability to the whims and demands of the “new global order.”

These realities indicate that the time is ripe for indigenous scholars to engage in critique-al studies. Native students and educators deserve a pedagogy that cultivates a sense of collective agency as well as a praxis that targets the dismantling of colonialism, helping them navigate the excesses of dominant power and revitalization of indigenous communities. While there is nothing inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary about theory, it is one of our primary responsibilities as educators to link the lived experience of theorizing to the processes of self-recovery and social transformation. That being said, this is not a call for indigenous scholars to simply join the conversation of critical theorists. Rather, Red pedagogy aims to initiate an indigenous conversation that can, in turn, engage in dialogical contestation with critical and revolutionary theories. The discussion that follows is intended to initiate this conversation, examining points of tension and intersection between Red pedagogy and critical theory: articulating possibilities for coalition.

At the Crossroads of Revolutionary Critical Theory and Red Pedagogy

Typically envisioned as leftist or beyond multicultural education, the “theoretical genesis” of North American critical pedagogy can be traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and other social reconstructionists writing in the post-Depression years (McLaren, 2003a, 2003b). According to Peter McLaren (2003a), leading exponents have always “cross-fertilized critical pedagogy with just about every transdisciplinary tradition imaginable, including theoretical forays into the Frankfurt School … the work of Richard Rorty, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Michael Foucault” (p. 66). With such transdisciplinary beginnings, it is not surprising that critical pedagogy has emerged in more recent years as a kind of umbrella for a variety of educators and scholars working toward social justice and greater equity (Lather, 1998). As such, postmodern, poststructuralist, feminist, postcolonial, Marxist, and critical race theorists have all developed their own forms of critical pedagogy. While each school of critical pedagogy has made important contributions to the field, Marxist and other radical scholars are highly suspicious of the overall abandonment of emancipatory agendas within the field. As a corrective, they advocate a form of critical pedagogy with a strong anticapitalist and emancipatory agenda or a “revolutionary critical pedagogy” (Allman, 2001).
The core theoretical commitments of revolutionary critical pedagogy are (a) recognize that capitalism, despite its power, is a “historically produced social relation that can be challenged (most forcefully by those exploited by it)” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, p. 272); (b) foreground historical materialist analysis, providing a theory of the material basis of social life rooted in historical social relations that uncover the structures of class conflict and the effects produced by the social division of labor;³⁸ (c) reimagine Marxist theory in the interests of the critical educational project; and (d) understand that Marxist revolutionary theory “must be flexible enough to reinvent itself” and not operate as “a universal truth but rather as a weapon of interpretation” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, pp. 301–302). Beyond these commitments, McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) have also defined the following foundational principles of revolutionary critical praxis:³⁹

1. A revolutionary critical pedagogy must be a collective process, one that involves using a Freirian dialogical learning approach.
2. A revolutionary critical pedagogy must be critical; that is, it works to locate the underlying causes of class exploitation and economic oppression within the social, political, and economic infrastructure of capitalist social relations of production.
3. A revolutionary critical pedagogy is profoundly systematic in the sense that it is guided by Marx's dialectical method of inquiry, which begins with the “real concrete” circumstances of the oppressed masses and moves toward a classification, conceptualization, analysis, and breaking down of the concrete social world into units of abstractions to get at the essence of social phenomena. It then reconstructs and makes the social world intelligible by transforming and translating theory into concrete social and political action.
4. A revolutionary critical pedagogy is participatory, involving building coalitions among community members, grassroots movements, church organizations, and labor unions.
5. A revolutionary critical pedagogy is a creative process, incorporating elements of popular culture (i.e., drama, music, oral history, narratives) as educational tools to politicize and revolutionize working-class consciousness.

Such principles are clearly relevant to Native students and educators in dire need of pedagogies of disruption, intervention, collectivity, hope, and possibility. The foregrounding of capitalist relations as the axis of exploitation helps reveal the history of indigenous peoples as one of dispossession and not simply oppression. Moreover, the trenchant critique of postmodernism reframes the “problem” of identity as a smokescreen that obfuscates the imperatives of indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

That being said, it is important to recognize that revolutionary critical pedagogy remains rooted in the Western paradigm and therefore in tension with indigenous knowledge and praxis. In particular, the root constructs of democratization, subjectivity, and property are all defined through Western frames of reference that presume the individual as the primary subject of “rights” and social status. The myriad implications of these basic failures serve as the jumping-off point for Red pedagogy, raising three central questions:

1. Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate constructions of subjectivity that can
theorize the multiple and intersecting layers of indigenous identity as well as root them in the historical material realities of indigenous life?

2. Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate a geopolitical landscape any more receptive to the notion of indigenous sovereignty than other critical pedagogies rooted in liberal conceptions of democracy?

3. Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate a view of land and natural resources that is less anthropocentric than other Western discourses?

While these questions help formulate the Red critique of revolutionary critical pedagogy, the perceived aporias are not theorized as deficiencies. Rather, they are viewed as points of tension, helping to define the spaces-in-between the Western and indigenous thought-worlds. Revolutionary scholars themselves acknowledge that “no theory can fully anticipate or account for the consequences of its application but remains a living aperture through which specific histories are made visible and intelligible” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, p. 301). Therefore, while revolutionary critical theory can serve as a vital tool for indigenous students and educators, the basis of Red pedagogy remains distinctive, rooted in traditional indigenous knowledge and praxis. The implications of this difference are articulated below as filtered through each of the defining questions of Red pedagogy. The hope is to map a common ground of struggle with revolutionary critical pedagogy that may in turn serve as the foundation for eventual solidarities.

1. Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate constructions of subjectivity that can theorize the multiple and intersecting layers of indigenous identity as well as root them in the historical material realities of indigenous life?

In a postmodern world, where “everything is everything,” revolutionary critical scholars critique the liberal postmodern practice of framing questions of identity and difference exclusively in terms of the cultural and discursive (e.g., language, signs, tropes), cutting them off from the structural causes and material relations that create “difference.” They also contest the overblurring of boundaries and emphasis of local over grand narratives, contending that such postmodern tactics serve to obfuscate, if not deny, the hierarchies of power. According to McLaren (1998), postmodernists ultimately promote “an ontological agnosticism” that not only relinquishes the primacy of social transformation but also encourages a kind of “epistemological relativism.”

In response, revolutionary scholars advocate the postcolonial notion of mestizaje as a more effectual model of multisubjectivity (Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren & Sleeter, 1995; Valle & Torres, 1995). The counterdiscourse of mestizaje is historically rooted in the Latin American subjectivity of the mestizo—a literally, a person of mixed ancestry, especially of American Indian, European, and African backgrounds (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) seminal text Borderlands/la Frontera: the New Mestiza articulates, “The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture (and) to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view” (p. 79).

Revolutionary scholars have embraced the spirit of the Chicana mestiza, viewing it as the postcolonial
antidote to imperialist notions of racial purity (di Leonardo, 1998). The emergent discourse of mestizaje embodies the mestiza's demonstrated refusal to prefer one language, one national heritage, or one culture at the expense of others. McLaren (1997) articulates mestizaje as “the embodiment of a transcultural, transnational subject, a self-reflexive entity capable of rupturing the facile legitimization of ‘authentic’ national identities through (the) articulation of a subject who is conjunctural, who is a relational part of an ongoing negotiated connection to the larger society, and who is interpolated by multiple subject positionings” (p. 12). In so doing, unlike liberal notions of subjectivity, it also roots identity in the discourse of power. Ultimately, the critical notion of mestizaje is itself multifunctional. It not only signifies the decline of the imperial West but also decenters Whiteness and undermines the myth of a democratic nation-state based on borders and exclusions (Valle & Torres, 1995).

Insofar as the notion of mestizaje disrupts the jingoistic discourse of nationalism, it is indeed crucial to the emancipatory project. As McLaren (1997) notes, “Educators would do well to consider Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) project of creating mestizaje theories that create new categories of identity for those left out or pushed out of existing ones” (p. 537). In so doing, however, he cautions that “care must be taken not to equate hybridity with equality” (p. 46). Coco Fusco (1995) similarly notes, “The postcolonial celebration of hybridity has (too often) been interpreted as the sign that no further concern about the politics of representation and cultural exchange is needed. With ease, we lapse back into the integrationist rhetoric of the 1960’s” (qtd. in McLaren, 1997, p. 46). In the wake of transgressing borders and building postnational coalitions, these words caution us against losing sight of the unique challenges of particular groups and their distinctive struggles for social justice. In taking this admonition seriously, it is important to consider the ways in which transgressive subjectivity—mestizaje—both furthers and impedes indigenous imperatives of self-determination and sovereignty.

Though the postcolonial construct of mestizaje (rooted in the discourses of power) differs from “free-floating” postmodern constructions of identity, an undercurrent of fluidity and displacedness continues to permeate, if not define, mestizaje. As such, it remains problematic for indigenous formations of subjectivity and the expressed need to forge and maintain integral connections to both land and place. Consider, for example, the following statement on the nature of critical subjectivity by Peter McLaren (1997):

The struggle for critical subjectivity is the struggle to occupy a space of hope—a liminal space, an intimation of the anti-structure, of what lives in the in-between zone of undecidability—in which one can work toward a praxis of redemption…. A sense of atopy has always been with me, a resplendent placelessness, a feeling of living in germinal formlessness … I cannot find words to express what this border identity means to me. All I have are what Georges Bastille (1988) calls mots glissants (slippery words). (pp. 13–14)

Though McLaren speaks passionately about the need for a “praxis of redemption,” the very possibility of redemption is situated within our willingness to not only accept but also flourish in the “liminal spaces,” border identities, and postcolonial hybridities inherent to postmodern life. In fact, McLaren perceives the fostering
of a “resplendent placelessness” itself as the gateway to a more just and democratic society. In so doing, he reveals the degree to which the radical mestizaje retains the same core assumption of other Western pedagogies. That is, in a democratic society, *the articulation of human subjectivity is rooted in the intangible notion of rights as opposed to the tangible reality of land.*

While indigenous scholars embrace the anti-colonial aspects of mestizaje, the historical-material realities of their communities require a construct that is also geographically rooted and historically placed. Consider, for example, the following commentary by Deloria (1994) on the centrality of place and land in the construction of American Indian subjectivity:

> Recognizing the sacredness of lands on which previous generations have lived and died is the foundation of all other sentiment. Instead of denying this dimension of our emotional lives, we should be setting aside additional places that have transcendent meaning. Sacred sites that higher spiritual powers have chosen for manifestation enable us to focus our concerns on the specific form of our lives … Sacred places are the foundation of all other beliefs and practices because they represent the presence of the sacred in our lives. They properly inform us that we are not larger than nature and that we have responsibility to the rest of the natural world that transcend our own personal desires and wishes. This lesson must be learned by each generation. (pp. 278, 281)

Gross misunderstanding of this connection between American Indian subjectivity and place and, more important, between sovereignty and land has been the source of myriad ethnocentric policies and injustices in Indian Country.

Consider, for example, the impact of the Indian Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1978. Government officials never anticipated that passage of this act would set up a virtually intractable conflict between property rights and religious freedom. But American Indians viewed the act as an invitation to return to their sacred sites. Since several sites were on government lands and being damaged by commercial use, numerous tribes filed lawsuits under the IRFA, alleging mismanagement and destruction of their “religious” sites. At the same time, Whitestream corporations, tourists, and even rock climbers filed their own lawsuits accusing federal land managers of illegally restricting access to Indian sacred sites. They argued that since such restrictions were placed on “public sites,” the IRFA violated the constitutional separation of church and state. This history alone points to the central difference of American Indian and Whitestream subjectivity, whether articulated through the theoretical frames of essentialism, postmodernism, or postcolonialism.

To be clear, indigenous and critical scholars share some common ground. Namely, they envision an anti-imperialist theory of subjectivity, one free of the compulsions of global capitalism and the racism, classism, sexism, and xenophobia it engenders. But where revolutionary scholars ground their vision in Western conceptions of democracy and justice that presume a “liberated” self, indigenous scholars ground their vision in conceptions of sovereignty that presume a profound connection to place and land. Thus, to a large degree, the seemingly liberatory constructs of fluidity, mobility, and transgression are perceived not only as the language of critical subjectivity but also as part of the fundamental lexicon of Western imperialism. Deloria...
Although the loss of land must be seen as a political and economic disaster of the first magnitude, the real exile of the tribes occurred with the destruction of ceremonial life (associated with the loss of land) and the failure or inability of white society to offer a sensible and cohesive alternative to the traditions, which Indians remembered. People became disoriented with respect to the world in which they lived. They could not practice their old ways, and the new ways which they were expected to learn were in a constant state of change because they were not part of a cohesive view of the world but simply adjustments which whites were making to the technology they invented. (p. 247)

Thus, insofar as American Indian identities continue to be defined and shaped in interdependence with place, the transgressive mestizaje functions as a potentially homogenizing force that presumes the continued exile of tribal peoples and their enduring absorption into the American “democratic” Whitestream. While critical scholars clearly aim to construct a very different kind of democratic solidarity that disrupts the sociopolitical and economic hegemony of the dominant culture around a transformed notion of mestizaje (one committed to the destabilization of the isolationist narratives of nationalism and cultural chauvinism), I argue that any liberatory project that does not begin with a clear understanding of the difference of indigenous sovereignty will, in the end, work to undermine tribal life.

The above analysis points to the need for an indigenous theory of subjectivity that addresses the political quest for sovereignty and the socioeconomic urgency to build transnational coalitions. In these efforts, it is critical that American Indians work to maintain their distinctiveness as tribal peoples of sovereign nations (construct effective means of border patrolling) while at the same time move toward building inter- and intratribal solidarity and political coalition (construct effective means of border crossing). Such a Red pedagogy would transform the struggle over identity to evolve, not apart from, but in relationship with, struggles over tribal land, resources, treaty rights, and intellectual property. A Red pedagogy also aims to construct a self-determined space for American Indian intellectualism, recognizing that survival depends on the ability not only to navigate the terrain of Western knowledge but also to theorize and negotiate a racist, sexist marketplace that aims to exploit the labor of signified “others” for capital gain. Finally, a Red pedagogy is committed to providing American Indian students the social and intellectual space to reimagine what it means to be Indian in contemporary U.S. society, arming them with a critical analysis of the intersecting systems of domination and the tools to navigate them.

Insofar as strong communities necessitate earnest and inspired leaders, the search for “comfortable modern identities” remains integral to the quest for sovereignty. The proposed Red construct of Indianismo\textsuperscript{12} is intended to guide the search for a theory of subjectivity in a direction that embraces the location of Native peoples in the “constitutive outside.” Specifically, it claims a distinctively indigenous space shaped by and through a matrix of legacy, power, and ceremony. In so doing, the notion of Indianismo stands outside the polarizing debates of essentialism and postmodernism, recognizing that both the timeless and temporal are essential for theorizing the complexity of indigenous realities (Dirlik, 1999).
While the constructs of revolutionary and post-colonial theories provide for a common ground of understanding, the Red notion of Indianismo remains grounded in the intellectual histories of indigenous peoples. As informed by this tradition, it is a subjectivity of shape more than temporality. As Deloria (1994) notes, “Most Americans raised in a society in which history is all encompassing, have very little idea of how radically their values would shift if they took the idea of place, both sacred and secular, seriously” (pp. 76–77). The centrality of place in the indigenous thought-world is explicitly conveyed through tradition and language and implicitly through the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature.

What distinguishes the indigenous struggle for self-determination from others is their collective effort to protect the rights of their peoples to live in accordance with traditional ways. It is the struggle to effectively negotiate the line between fetishizing such identities and recognizing their importance to the continuance of Indians as tribal peoples. Regardless of how any individual indigenous person chooses to live his or her life, he or she is responsible for protecting the right to live according to ancestral ways. As such, while indigenous peoples resist the kind of essentialism that recognizes only one way of being, they also work to retain a vast constellation of distinct traditions that serve as the defining characteristics of tribal life. As Deloria and Lytle (1983) note, this allegiance to traditional knowledge that has protected American Indians from annihilation and absorption into the democratic mainstream.

To this end, traditional tribal languages must play a crucial role in maintaining the fabric of Indianismo. Indigenous languages are replete with metaphors of existence that implicitly convey notions of multiplicity, hybridity, dialectics, contingency, and a sense of the “imaginary.” For example, in Quéchua, the word for being, person, and Andean person is all the same—Runa. As such, this root term has the potential to incorporate the many subcategories of beingness while retaining the same basic reference group as in the words laqtaruna (inhabitants of the village) and qualaruna (foreigner, literally naked, peeled). In addition, the root can be used passively as in yuyay runa (one who is knowing or understanding), actively as in runayachikk (that which cultivates a person), or reflexively as in runaman tukuy (to complete oneself). In other words, runa is a virtually limitless category, one open to the sense of being as well as becoming. Thus, the “revolutionary” ideas of hybridity, relationality, and dialectics are neither new nor revolutionary to this indigenous community but rather have been an integral part of the Quéchua way of life for more than five hundred years.

2. **Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate a geopolitical landscape any more receptive to the notion of indigenous sovereignty than other critical pedagogies rooted in liberal conceptions of democracy?**

From the vantage point of the federal government, the very notion of tribes as internal sovereigns or “domestic dependent nations” is destabilizing to democracy, defying the principle of America as one people, one nation. Yet, from the perspective of American Indians, “democracy” has been wielded with impunity, as the first and most virulent weapon of mass destruction. Resisting the tides of history, Red pedagogy operates on the assumption that indigenous sovereignty does not oppose democracy. On the contrary, it views sovereignty as democracy’s only lifeline asking, Is it possible for democracy to grow from the seeds of tyranny? Can the “good life” be built upon the deaths of thousands?
The playing field for this discussion is the terrain of American education where “the production of democracy, the practice of education, and the constitution of the nation-state” have been interminably bound together (Mitchell, 2001). Historically, liberal educators have championed the notion of cultural pluralism as the pathway to democracy, imbricating the constructs of national unity, multicultural harmony, and inclusion as the guiding principles of American education. Within this rhetoric, schools were to become an extension of the public sphere, a place where citizens could participate in the democratic project by coming together and transcending their racial, class, and gendered differences to engage in “rational discourse.” Though an improvement on “traditional” models of schooling, progressive education still functioned as an assimilationist pedagogy, designed to absorb cultural difference by “including” marginalized groups in the universality of the nation-state, advocating a kind of multicultural nationalism. As Mitchell (2001) notes, in the postwar years, “the philosophy of American pluralism was framed as an extension of equality of opportunity to all members of the national body, particularly those disenfranchised by racism” (p. 55). This ideology informed educational theory and practice from the Progressive education movement in the 1930s and 1940s to the intergroup education movement of the 1950s, the multicultural education movement from the 1960s onward, and liberal forms of critical pedagogy from the 1980s to the present.

Contemporary revolutionary scholars critique liberal forms of critical pedagogy, naming their “politics of inclusion” as an accomplice to the broader project of neoliberalism. Specifically, they argue that such models ignore the historic, economic, and material conditions of “difference,” conspicuously averting attention away from issues of power. Critical scholars therefore maintain that while liberal theorists may invest in the “theoretical idealism” of democracy, they remain “amnesiatic toward the continued lived realities of democratically induced oppression” (Richardson & Villenas, 2000, p. 260). In contrast to liberal conceptions of democratic education, revolutionary scholars call attention to the “democratically induced” oppression experienced by colonized peoples. In response, they work to reenvison democratic education as a project “rooted in a radical and liberatory politics,” replacing liberal (procapitalist) conceptions of democracy with Marxist formulations of a *socialist* democracy (Richardson & Villenas, 2000, p. 261). In so doing, they reconstitute democracy as a perpetually unfinished process, explicitly recentering democratic education around issues of power, dominance, subordination, and stratification.

Within this context, “democratic pedagogies” are defined as those that motivate teachers, students, schools, and communities to make choices with “the overarching purpose of contributing to increased social justice, equality, and improvement in the quality of life for all constituencies within the larger society” (Fischman & McLaren, 2000, p. 168). Giroux (2001) maintains that such pedagogies contest the dominant views of democracy propagated by “neoliberal gurus”—where profit making and material accumulation are defined as the essence of the good life. With these directives in mind, McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) articulate two fundamental principles of a revolutionary critical pedagogy: (a) to recognize the “class character” of education in capitalist schooling and (b) to advocate a “socialist reorganization of capitalist society” (Krupskaya, 1985). Ultimately, they argue that education can never be “free” or “equal” as long as social classes exist (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, p.298).
While revolutionary theorists help articulate a more genuine democracy than neoliberal forms, they still theorize within a Western, linear political framework. For this reason, indigenous scholar José Barreiro (1995) notes that “in the context of jurisdiction and political autonomy, traditional Indigenous political processes are characterized by the struggle to stay independent of both left and right wing ideologies, political parties and their often sanguine hostilities.” Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to convince the Miskitus, Sumus, Ramas, Quéchua, and Aymara Indians of Central and South America that leftist or specifically Marxist-inspired regimes held any more promise for indigenous peoples than other Western formations of governance (Richardson & Villenas, 2000).

Thus, while the Marxist, leftist, socialist politics of revolutionary theorists expose important linkages between colonialist forces and capitalist greed, they do not, in and of themselves, represent an emancipatory politics for indigenous people. In particular, while revolutionary scholars may have successfully troubled dominant definitions of democracy, pluralism, and the nation-state by infusing the discourse with a cogent critique of global capitalism, it is not clear that they give any greater consideration to the pedagogical imperatives of indigenous sovereignty. Therein lies the central tension between revolutionary visions of a socialist democratic education and the indigenous project of education for sovereignty and self-determination. Specifically, while it is possible that the core construct of democracy can be sufficiently troubled and divested from its Western capitalist desires, a Red pedagogy requires that it be decentered as the primary struggle concept. This repositioning distinguishes the aim of indigenous education—sovereignty—from that of revolutionary critical pedagogy—liberation through socialist democracy. One of the most significant ways this difference plays out is the quest for indigenous sovereignty tied to issues of land, Western constructions of democracy are tied to issues of property. This important distinction necessitates an unpacking of critical assumptions regarding the relationship between labor, property, citizenship, and nationhood, what Richardson and Villenas (2000, p.268) identify as a critique of “assumed democracy.” Moreover, given the inexorable ties between land and sovereignty, sovereignty and citizenship, and citizenship and the nation-state, one of the most glaring questions for indigenous scholars is how a revolutionary socialist politics can imagine a “new” social order unfolding upon (still) occupied land.

In other words, while revolutionary theorists advocate a “socialist commitment to [the] egalitarian distribution of economic power and exchange” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, p.306), my question is this: How does the “egalitarian distribution” of colonized lands constitute greater justice for indigenous peoples? If the emancipatory project is built upon the spoils of conquest, how is that liberatory for Native peoples? While revolutionary scholars rightly challenge the inherent inequalities of capitalist society, they retain the metaphors of power and exchange as defined through the Western notion of property. This failure to problematize the issue of (colonized) land is perhaps the major deficiency of Marxist and other Western-centric politics.

Moreover, though the precepts of a revolutionary critical pedagogy and Red pedagogy agree on the enduring relevance of the nation-state and its role as an agent of capital, they diverge in their ideas of how these relations should reconceptualize democracy. Revolutionary theorists insist that the only way to manage diversity is through the practice of “genuine democracy,” which is only possible in a socialist economy...
But, contrary to the assertions of revolutionary theorists, capitalist (exploitative) modes of production are not predicated on the exploitation of free (slave) labor but rather, first and foremost, premised on the colonization of indigenous land. The privileging and distinguishing of “class struggle” and concomitant assertion of capitalism as the totality underestimates the overarching nature of decolonization: a totality that places capitalism, patriarchy, White supremacy, and Western Christianity in radical contingency. This tension alone necessitates an indigenous reenvisioning of the precepts of revolutionary theory, bringing them into alignment with the realities of indigenous struggle. The task ahead is to detach and dethink the notion of sovereignty from its connection to Western understandings of power and base it on indigenous notions of relationship.

However the question of indigenous sovereignty is resolved politically, there will be significant implications on the intellectual lives of indigenous peoples, particularly in terms of education. Lyons (2000) views the history of colonization, in part, as the manifestation of “rhetorical imperialism,” that is, “the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of debate” (Lyons, 2000, p.452). Indeed, throughout the history of federal Indian law, terms and definitions have continually changed over time. Indians have gone from “sovereigns” to “wards” and from “nations” to “tribes,” while the practice of “treaty making” has given way to one of agreements (Lyons, 2000). As each change served the needs of the nation-state, Lyons argues that “the erosion of Indian national sovereignty can be credited in part to a rhetorically imperialist use of language by white powers” (Lyons, 2000, p.453).

Thus, just as language was central to the colonialist project, it must be central to the project of decolonization. Indigenous scholar Haunani-Kay Trask (1993) writes, “Thinking in one’s own cultural referents leads to conceptualizing in one’s own world view which, in turn, leads to disagreement with and eventual opposition to the dominant ideology” (p.54). Thus, where a revolutionary critical pedagogy compels students and educators to question how “knowledge is related historically, culturally and institutionally to the processes of production and consumption,” a Red pedagogy compels students to question how knowledge is related to the processes of colonization. It furthermore asks how traditional indigenous knowledges can inform the project of decolonization. In short, this implies a threefold process for education. Specifically, a Red pedagogy necessitates (a) the subjection of the processes of Whitestream schooling to critical pedagogical analyses; (b) the decoupling and dethinking of education from its Western, colonialist contexts, including revolutionary critical pedagogy; and (c) the conceptualization of indigenous efforts to reground students and educators in traditional knowledge and teachings. In short, a Red pedagogy aims to create awareness of what Trask terms “disagreements,” helping to foster discontent about the “inconsistencies between the world as it is and as it should be” (Alfred, 1999, p.132).

Though this process might state the obvious, it is important to recognize the value and significance of each separate component. I wish to underscore that the project of decolonization not only demands students to acquire the knowledge of “the oppressor” but also the skills to negotiate and dismantle the implications of such knowledge. Concurrently, traditional perspectives on power, justice, and relationships are essential, both to defend against further co-optation and to build intellectual solidarity—a collectivity of indigenous knowledge.
In short, “the time has come for people who are from someplace Indian to take back the discourse on Indians” (Alfred, 1999, p.143).

Finally, it needs to be understood that sovereignty is not a separatist discourse. On the contrary, it is a restorative process. As Warrior (1995) suggests, indigenous peoples must learn to “withdraw without becoming separatists,” and we must be “willing to reach out for the contradictions within our experience” and open ourselves to “the pain and the joy of others” (p. 124). This sentiment renders sovereignty a profoundly spiritual project involving questions about who we are as a people. Indeed, Deloria and Lytle (1984) suggest that indigenous sovereignty will not be possible until “Indians resolve for themselves a comfortable modern identity” (p. 266).

This “resolution” will require indigenous peoples to engage in the difficult process of self-definition, to come to consensus on a set of criteria that defines what behaviors and beliefs constitute acceptable expressions of their tribal heritage (Deloria & Lytle, 1984, p. 254). While this process is necessarily deliberative, it is not (as in revolutionary pedagogies) limited to the processes of conscientizacao. Rather, it remains an inward- and outward-looking process, a process of reenchantment, of ensoulment, that is both deeply spiritual and sincerely mindful. The guiding force in this process must be the tribe, the people, the community; the perseverance of these entities and their connection to indigenous lands and sacred places is what inherits “spirituality” and, in turn, the “sovereignty” of Native peoples. As Lyons notes, “rather than representing an enclave, sovereignty … is the ability to assert oneself renewed—in the presence of others. It is a people's right to rebuild its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world … an adamant refusal to dissociate culture, identity, and power from the land” (Lyons, 2000, p. 457). In other words, the vision of tribal and community stability rests in the desire and ability of indigenous peoples to listen to not only each other but also the land. The question remains, though, whether the ability to exercise spiritual sovereignty will continue to be fettered if not usurped by the desires of a capitalist state intent on devouring the land.

3. Do critical/revolutionary pedagogies articulate a view of land and natural resources that is less anthropocentric than other Western discourses?

While the tools of revolutionary critical pedagogy elicit a powerful critique of capitalism and other hegemonic forces that undermine tribal sovereignty, the question remains whether the Western, particularly Marxist, roots of revolutionary critical pedagogy preclude it from disrupting the deep structures of a colonialist discourse dependent on the “continued robbing of nature.” As Bowers (2003) notes, though Marx was a critic of capitalism, he shared many of its deep cultural assumptions. Specifically, he argues that Marx shared the need to think in universal terms, the disdain for peasant and indigenous cultures as backward and thus in need of being brought into the industrial age, a linear view of progress that also assumed the West's leading role in establishing the new revolutionary consciousness that would replace the backward traditions of other cultures—and in supplying the elite vanguard of theorists, an anthropocentric way of thinking that reduced Nature to an exploitable resource (in the interests of the masses rather than for profit).
As such, Bowers is among the chief critics of revolutionary critical pedagogy and its lack of attention to the ecological crisis. He particularly indicts the following “core cultural assumptions” of revolutionary critical pedagogy as Eurocentric, rendering it indistinguishable from other Western pedagogies. According to Bowers (2003):

1. Critical pedagogy assumes that critical reflection, or what Freire (1998) calls “conscientization,” is the only approach to “nonoppressive knowledge and cultural practices” (Bowers, 2003, p. 13). And that the imposition of “Enlightenment ways of thinking with all its culturally specific baggage, is no different from universalizing the Western industrialized approach to food production and consumption, forms of entertainment, and consumer-based subjectivity” (Bowers, 2003, p.14). Moreover, the emphasis on critical reflection undermines the “mythopoetic narratives” that serve as “the basis of a culture’s moral system, way of thinking about relationships, and its silences.”

2. Critical pedagogy presumes that change is “a progressive force that requires the constant overturning of traditions.” The directives to “rename” and “transform” are equivalent to injunctions to replace “local traditions of self-sufficiency with a worldview that represents change and individual autonomy as expressions of progress.” Moreover, the “emphasis on change, transformation, liberatory praxis, and the continual construction of experience” has led critical theorists to ignore what needs to be conserved and the value of “intergenerational knowledge” (aka tradition).

3. Critical pedagogy is “based on an anthropocentric view of human/nature relationships” that “contributes to the widely held view that humans can impose their will on the environment and that when the environment breaks down experts using an instrumentally based critical reflection will engineer a synthetic replacement” (Bowers, 2003, p.15).

4. Critical pedagogy presumes a “Western approach to literacy” that “reinforces patterns of social relationships not found in oral-based cultures.” In “oral-based cultures, participation is the central feature of life rather than the analytical and decontextualized judgment that fixed texts make possible” (Bowers, 2003).

While Bowers (2003) is right to caution against the unconscious and unilateral imposition of “enlightenment ways of thinking,” the frameworks of revolutionary critical pedagogy are malleable by design, rendering the overall tone of his critique somewhat unwarranted. Indeed, McLaren (1991) himself (Bowers's chief target) concedes, “I am certainly aware of the implications of a creeping Eurocentrism slipping through the textual fissure of any theoretical discourse … and that the conceptual space of any work … is open to many forms of colonization” (p. 463). In addition to overgeneralizing the intentions of critical theorists, Bowers underestimates the capacities of indigenous teachers and scholars, basing much his critique on the assumption that they share his own expectations for critical pedagogy, namely, that it functions as a one-size-fit-all pedagogical elixir. Despite these shortcomings, Bowers raises some incisive and important points that compel closer examination.
First, while revolutionary theorists undoubtedly place a premium on critical reflection, any close reading of their pedagogies reveals that the primary emphasis is on meaning. This emphasis renders Bowers’s (2003) claim that such theorists advocate critical reflection as the only viable approach to nonoppressive knowledge and cultural practices unfounded. Revolutionary theorists are quite clear that their pedagogies (including the adherence to Marxism) are intended to serve as guides to action, not as “a set of metaphysical dogmas” (McLaren, 2003b, p. 29). According to McLaren (2003b), revolutionary critical theory requires that “symbolic formations” be analyzed “in their spatio-temporal settings, within certain fields of interaction, and in the context of social institutions and structures so that teachers have a greater sense of how meanings are inscribed, encoded, decoded, transmitted, deployed, circulated and received in the arena of everyday social relations” (McLaren, 2003b, p. 29). The emphasis on “symbolic formations” (as opposed to the more limited category of text) conceivably includes expressions of meaning that are nontextually based (e.g., dance, ceremony, song), ones that Bowers identifies as the definitive features of “mythopoetic cultures.”

Bowers’s (2003) second claim, that critical pedagogy presumes change as a progressive force requiring “the constant overturning of traditions,” is perhaps more warranted. Indeed, the discourse is littered with references to social and self-transformation. Specifically, revolutionary theorists posit an action-oriented pedagogy with the objective of encouraging students and teachers to use “critical knowledge that is transformative as opposed to reproductive, [and] empowering as opposed to oppressing,” asking, “what is the relationship between our classrooms and our effort to build a better society?” (McLaren, 2003b, pp. xv, xxxiv). The end goal is to encourage “students beyond the world they already know (and) to expand their range of human possibilities” (Giroux, 2001, p. 24).

While any pedagogy with a root metaphor of “change as progress” presents specific challenges to indigenous cultures rooted in tradition and intergenerational knowledge, revolutionary theorists do not categorically advocate change as inherently progressive. Rather, they are very definitive in their distinction between change that emancipates and change that merely furthers the dictates of market imperatives. McLaren (2003b), in particular, is candid in his advocacy of change as defined by Marxist imperatives to act against imperialism and exploitation. He writes, “Millions from aggrieved populations worldwide stand witness to the law governed process of exploitation known as capital accumulation, to the ravages of uneven development known as ‘progress,’ and to the practice of imperialism in new guises called ‘globalization’” (McLaren, 2003b, p.13). McLaren, moreover, agrees with Fromm’s positioning of “revolutionary humanism” at the center of Marx’s philosophy, quoting, “Marx’s aim was that of the spiritual emancipation of man, of his liberation from the claims of economic determination, of restituting him in his human wholeness, of enabling him to find unity and harmony with his fellow man and with Nature” (qtd. in McLaren, 2003b, p.13). While such sentiments reveal a pedagogy that is clearly concerned with change and social transformation, it is not unconcerned (as Bowers contends) with the interconnection between economic oppression and environmental destruction.

A more pertinent question is to what degree the acts of interrogation and transformation themselves encode the same sociotemporal markers of a colonialist consciousness intent on extinguishing “traditional” (sacred) ways of knowing with ostensibly more “progressive” (secular) understandings of the world. In other words,
while revolutionary theorists challenge the moral imperatives of modern consciousness, they may inadvertently maintain its epistemic codes, reinforcing the bias toward “reflexively organized knowledge”—the same means by which “tradition” is undermined. Consider, for example, the following commentary on the role of tradition as expressed by McLaren (1991):

[While] I do not object to tradition itself. What I do object to is the concealment of cultural uncertainties in the way that tradition gets ideologically produced … [and] while I agree that there are ecologically, morally, politically, enabling aspects to mythic, religious, and familial traditions, and that such traditions can be empowering to the extent that they locate subjectivity in a reciprocal relationship to the larger environment, critical pedagogy concentrates on the process of demythologization. That is I am concerned with uncovering the social contradictions that are ideologically resolved or harmonized to preserve existing relations of power—relations which have debilitating effects on certain groups. (p.469)

And he goes on to ask,

Why shouldn't all aspects of culture be problematized? To problematize culture does not guarantee that everything ‘traditional’ will be condemned or rejected … what it does mean is that we can recover from such traditional cultural texts and practices those aspects which empower and discard or transform those which don't. (p. 469)

Thus (contrary to Bowers’s reading), while McLaren does consider the effect of revolutionary pedagogies on traditional knowledge, he may be too dismissive of the cultural codes embedded in the act of social transformation. It is, for instance, highly unlikely that the “pedagogical negativism” required of such emancipatory pedagogies can be wielded with the degree of surgical precision revolutionary theorists confidently express—teaching students to doubt everything but also believe in and take seriously the truth claims of their own traditions. In other words, the process of interrogation itself may encode the same sociotemporal markers of a colonialist consciousness that incites movement away from “sacred” ways of knowing toward increased secularization. In response to McLaren, rather than ask, “Why shouldn't all aspects of culture be problematized?” indigenous scholars should ask how the processes of problematizing itself may serve as a homogenizing force, muting and domesticating the distinctiveness of traditional ways of knowing.

That does not, however, preclude such processes of interrogation from being an integral part of Red pedagogy, particularly as indigenous communities remain threatened and deeply compromised by colonialist forces. Bowers’s (2003) dismissal of the need for social transformation within indigenous communities is not only shortsighted but also patronizing. For example, while he admires with romantic fascination “how the Quéchua people have resisted European colonization,” he does not specify which Quéchua peoples he is referring to—those in Paramus, New Jersey; Hartford, Connecticut; Ayacucho, Peru; or Quito, Ecuador? Like other indigenous nations, “the Quéchua” are profoundly diverse, and while most continue to resist the forces of colonization, such a stance is by no means universal. Moreover, while indigenous cultures have, for centuries, managed to retain their traditions in the face of imperialism—resisting and selectively employing
facets of Western culture as they see fit—they can only resist what they fully know. When engaged with “caution and restraint,” I believe the tools of revolutionary pedagogy can prove invaluable, particularly in revealing the inner sanctums of power and hidden structures of domination.

Bowers's (2003) third claim, that revolutionary critical pedagogy is “based on an anthropocentric view of human/nature relationships,” is perhaps the most accurate. Consider, for example, the (anthropocentric) questions that revolutionary theorist Ramin Farahmandpur (see McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001) positions at the center of the discourse: What does it mean to be human? How can we live humanely? What actions or steps must be taken to be able to live humanely? While such questions could be answered in a manner that decenters human beings (i.e., to be “human” means living in a way that accounts for the deep interconnection between all living entities), McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) choose to reassert the primacy of Marxist theory in their responses. Specifically, they confirm and concur with Marx's radical assertion of a profoundly human-centered world, quoting the following from Volume 1 of Capital: “A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax” (Marx, 1977, p. 284).

McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) respond, “In other words, the fundamental distinction between humans and other species is that humans are endowed with a social imagination, one that operates as a tool for transforming their social conditions,” underscoring the primacy of consciousness as “a powerful mediating force in transforming the existing the social and economic structures that constrain it” (p. 307). Thus, following Marx, they insist that the “question of what it means to be human” is “conditioned by the specificity of the socio-historical conditions and circumstances of human society,” believing that “the purpose of education is linked to men and women realizing their powers and capacities” (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001, p. 305, emphasis added).

Such expressions of profound anthropocentrism are not only unnecessary to the imperatives of the critical project but also weaken its validity. McLaren and Farahmandpur's (2001) maintenance of the hierarchy between human beings and nature not only prohibits us from learning from “all our relations” but also reinscribes the colonialist logic that conscripts “nature” to the service of human society. Indeed, McLaren (2003b) seconds Kovel's (2002) notion that “the transition to socialism will require the creation of a usufructuary of the earth” (p. 31). While he contends that a “usufructuary” implies “restoring ecosystemic integrity” so that “ecocentric modes of production” are made accessible to all, the model exists for the sole purposes of transferring assets “to the direct producers” (i.e., worker ownership and control). The value of the Earth itself is therefore only derived in terms of its ability to serve as a distinctly human resource, carrying no inherent worth or subjectivity.

While Bowers’s (2003) final claim, that critical pedagogy presumes a “Western approach to literacy” and reinforces a “pattern of social relationships not found in oral-based cultures,” is rather self-evident, it is unclear what kind of pedagogy (a Western construct) would not presume literacy as its basis. Moreover, indigenous cultures engaged in institutionalized forms of schooling are just as concerned with students’ literacy as other
cultures. Indeed, the value of revolutionary pedagogies is that the concept of “literacy” is reformed to take on meaning beyond a simple depoliticized notion of reading and writing. Specifically, it takes on a politics of literacy that recognizes it as being “socially constructed within political contexts: that is, within contexts where access to economic, cultural, political, and institutional power is structured unequally” (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993, p. xviii). In Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis, and the Postmodern, Lankshear and McLaren (1993) further comment on the notion of critical literacy, writing,

In short, literacies are ideological. They reflect the differential structured power available to human agents through which to secure the promotion and serving of their interests, including the power to shape literacy in ways consonant with those interests. Consequently, the conceptions people have of what literacy involves, of what counts as being literate, what they see as “real” or “appropriate” uses of reading and writing skills, and the way people actually read and write in the course of their daily lives—these all reflect and promote values, beliefs, assumptions, and practices which shape the way life is lived within a given social milieu and, in turn, influence which interests are promoted or undermined as a result of how life is lived there. Thus, literacies are indicies of the dynamics of power. (p.xviii)

Such a definition neither limits “literacy” to purely Western conceptions nor advocates an unconscious approach that merely “enables producers to get their message to individual consumers,” as Bowers (2003) contends. On the contrary, critical theorists aim to disrupt the unconscious processes of “language” acquisition and communication. While the question regarding the homogenizing affects of critical literacy reemerges, indigenous cultures have been navigating the impact of such forces since the time of contact. Furthermore, knowledge of the oppressor and the oppressor's language is essential to the processes of resistance, particularly in a context where the vast majority of indigenous students are schooled in Whitestream institutions.

In summary, Bowers's (2003) critique of critical theory identifies significant points of tension but it is limited both by its inaccurate reading of such theories and its essentializing of indigenous cultures. In perhaps the final irony, Bowers's own outline for an eco-conscious education employs the same precepts of critical pedagogy that he discounts. Specifically, he calls for a pedagogy that helps students (a) understand the causes, extent, and political strategies necessary for addressing environmental racism; (b) clarify the nature of the ideological and economic forces that are perpetuating the domination of the South by the North; (c) revitalize noncommodified forms of knowledge, skills, and activities within the communities represented by the students in the classroom; and (d) recognize the many ecologically informed changes in individual lifestyles and uses of technology that will help ensure that future generations will not inherit a degraded environment. Such precepts clearly presume some of the cultural assumptions of critical pedagogy—namely, the importance of critical reflection, an orientation toward (emancipatory) change, and a mastery of critical forms of literacy that enable such reflection and change.

Revolutionary pedagogies have the potential to provide such a structure as they have the analytical robustness and ideological inclination needed to sort through the underlying power manipulations of
colonialist forces. Yet, as noted by Bowers (2003) and other critics, critical pedagogy is born of a Western tradition that has many components in conflict with indigenous knowledge, including a view of time and progress that is linear and an anthropocentric view that puts humans at the center of the universe. Nevertheless, if revolutionary critical pedagogy is able to sustain the same kind of penetrating analysis it unleashes on capitalism, it may evolve into an invaluable tool for indigenous peoples and their allies, fighting to protect and extend indigenous sovereignty over tribal land and resources.

Red Pedagogy: Implications for Education

From the standpoint of Red pedagogy, the primary lesson in all of this is pedagogical. In other words, as we are poised to raise yet another generation in a nation at war and at risk, we must consider how emerging conceptions of citizenship, sovereignty, and democracy will affect the (re)formation of our national identity, particularly among young people in schools. As Mitchell (2001) notes, “The production of democracy, the practice of education, and the constitution of the nation-state” have always been interminably bound together. The imperative before us as citizens is to engage a process of unthinking our colonial roots and rethinking democracy. For teachers and students, this means that we must be willing to act as agents of transgression, posing critical questions and engaging dangerous discourse. Such is the basis of Red pedagogy. In particular, Red pedagogy offers the following seven precepts as a way of thinking our way around and through the challenges facing American education in the 21st century and our mutual need to define decolonizing pedagogies:

1. **Red pedagogy is primarily a pedagogical project.** In this context, pedagogy is understood as being inherently political, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual.

2. **Red pedagogy is fundamentally rooted in indigenous knowledge and praxis.** It is particularly interested in knowledge that furthers understanding and analysis of the forces of colonization.

3. **Red pedagogy is informed by critical theories of education.** A Red pedagogy searches for ways it can both deepen and be deepened by engagement with critical and revolutionary theories and praxis.

4. **Red pedagogy promotes an education for decolonization.** Within Red pedagogy, the root metaphors of decolonization are articulated as equity, emancipation, sovereignty, and balance. In this sense, an education for decolonization makes no claim to political neutrality but rather engages a method of analysis and social inquiry that troubles the capitalist-imperialist aims of unfettered competition, accumulation, and exploitation.

5. **Red pedagogy is a project that interrogates both democracy and indigenous sovereignty.** In this context, sovereignty is broadly defined as “a people’s right to rebuild its demand to exist and present its gifts to the world … an adamant refusal to dissociate culture, identity, and power from the land” (Lyons, 2000).

6. **Red pedagogy actively cultivates praxis of collective agency.** That is, Red pedagogy aims
to build transcultural and transnational solidarities among indigenous peoples and others committed to reimagining a sovereign space free of imperialist, colonialist, and capitalist exploitation.

7. **Red pedagogy is grounded in hope.** This is, however, not the future-centered hope of the Western imagination but rather a hope that lives in contingency with the past—one that trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors, the power of traditional knowledge, and the possibilities of new understandings.

In the end, a Red pedagogy is about engaging the development of “community-based power” in the interest of “a responsible political, economic, and spiritual society.” That is, the power to live out “active presences and survivals” rather than an illusionary democracy.” Vizenor’s (1993) notion of survivance signifies a state of being beyond “survival, endurance, or a mere response to colonization” and of moving toward “an active presence … and active repudiation of dominance, tragedy and victimry.” In these post-Katrina times, I find the notion of survivance—particularly as it relates to colonized peoples—to be poignant and powerful. It speaks to our collective need to decolonize, to push back against empire, and to reclaim what it means to be a people of sovereign mind and body. The peoples of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans serve as a reminder to all of us that just as the specter of colonialism continues to haunt the collective soul of America, so too does the more hopeful spirit of indigeneity.

**Notes**

1. Adapting from the feminist notion of “malestream,” Claude Denis (1997) defines “Whitestream” as the idea that while American society is not “White” in sociodemographic terms, it remains principally and fundamentally structured on the basis of the Anglo-European “White” experience.

2. The Indian Removal Act (ch. 48, 4, Stat. 411) provided for “an exchange of lands with any of the Indians residing in any of the states and territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.” Passage of this act set in motion mass forced relocations of the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole among other Eastern nations. In the words of Churchill and Morris (1992), “The idea was to clear the native population from the entire region east of the Mississippi, opening it up for the exclusive use and occupancy of Euroamericans and their Black slaves.”

3. The General Allotment Act, sponsored by Senator Henry Dawes, was passed in 1887. This act authorized the president, at his discretion, to survey and break up the communal landholdings of tribes into individual allotments. As a result of the Dawes Act, the Indian land base was reduced from approximately 138 million to 48 million acres or by nearly two thirds. In addition, tribes were divested of their right to determine their own membership, specious identification procedures were enacted, and the trust doctrine was severely violated.

4. The Termination policy was embodied in House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) No. 108, passed August 1, 1953. It reads as follows: “Whereas it is the policy of the Congress, as rapidly as possible, to make Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, and to grant them all of the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship; and Whereas the Indian within the territorial limits of the
United States should assume their full responsibilities as American citizens; Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is declared to be the sense of the Congress that, at the earliest possible time, all of the Indian tribes and individual members thereof located within the States of California, Florida, New York and Texas, and all of the following named Indian tribes and individual members thereof, should be freed from Federal supervision and control from all disabilities and limitations specially applicable to Indians.”

5. According to Nieto (1995), multicultural education can be defined as “a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning.”

6. Marxist-feminist scholar Teresa Ebert (1991) distinguishes critical from critique-al studies as a means of recentering the importance of critique as opposed to criticism in discourse.

7. Leading advocates of revolutionary critical pedagogy include Paula Allman (who penned the term) and Peter McLaren, as well as Mike Cole, Terry Eagleton, Ramin Farahmandpur, Dave Hill, Jane Kenway, Helen Radunzt, Glen Rikowski, and Valerie Scatamburlo–D’Annibale. Others whose work has greatly influenced the formation of revolutionary critical pedagogy include Teresa Ebert, Paulo Friere, Martha Gimenez, Antonio Gramsci, Henry Giroux, Rosemary Hennessy, Chrys Ingraham, Karl Marx, and Ellen Meskins Wood.

8. Unlike other contemporary narratives that focus on one form of oppression or another, Scatamburlo–D’Annibale and McLaren (2003) note that the power of historical materialism resides in “its ability to reveal (a) how forms of oppression based on categories of difference do not possess relative autonomy from class relations but rather constitute the ways in which oppression is lived/experienced within a class based system and (b) how all forms of social oppression function within an overlapping capitalist system” (p.149).

9. These principles are articulated by Farahmandpur in the foreword of McLaren’s (2003b, p. xvii) seminal text Life in Schools.

10. The notion of mestizaje as absorption is particularly problematic for indigenous peoples of Central and South America, where the myth of the mestizaje (belief that the continent's original cultures and inhabitants no longer exist) has been used for centuries to force the integration of indigenous communities into the national mestizo model (Van Cott, 1994). According to Roldolfo Stavenhagen (1992), the myth of mestizaje has provided the ideological pretext for numerous South American governmental laws and policies expressly designed to strengthen the nation-state through the incorporation of all “nonnational” (read: indigenous) elements into the mainstream. Thus, what Valle and Torres (1995) describe as “the continents unfinished business of cultural hybridization” (p.141), indigenous peoples view as the continents’ long and bloody battle to absorb their existence into the master narrative of the mestizo.


12. The term Indianismo was coined by Alexander Ewen as a counterterm to indigenismo or mestizaje, which
have served as assimilationist constructs with regard to indigenous sovereignty. Ewen defines Indianismo as "the Indian way," or from an indigenous perspective.

13. He cites the recent massacres of indigenous peoples in Brazil and Peru (by right- and left-wing elements, respectively) as evidence for the ongoing relevance of this struggle.

14. The indigenous conception of land is defined as "the inalienable foundation for the processes of kinship," distinguishing it from "property" which is defined by relations of alienability.

15. Indigenous notions of power are defined as being rooted in concepts of respect, balance, reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence.

16. Conscientazcao is a Frerian term that refers to the development of critical social consciousness, wherein dialogue and analysis serve as the foundation for reflection and action.

References


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