Ideology and Curriculum

Third Edition

Michael W. Apple

RoutledgeFalmer
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Preface to the 25th Anniversary Third Edition

Placing *Ideology and Curriculum* in Context

Any analysis of the ways in which unequal power is reproduced and contested in society must deal with education. Educational institutions provide one of the major mechanisms through which power is maintained and challenged. These institutions and the manner in which they are organized and controlled are integrally related to the ways in which specific people get access to economic and cultural resources and power. Yet, because education is usually part of the public sphere and is regulated by the state, it is also a site of conflict, since in many nations there are serious questions about whether the state is organized in ways that benefit the majority of its citizens. Certainly the current and seemingly unremitting attacks by conservative forces on anything that is "public" in this society document how politicized this has become.

There are other, equally important issues that can be raised, of course. Education is also a site of conflict about the kind of knowledge that is and should be taught, about whose knowledge is "official" and about who has the right to decide both what is to be taught and how teaching and learning are to be evaluated. Thus, as I argue throughout this volume, a truly critical study of education needs to deal with more than the technical issues of how we teach efficiently and effectively—too often the dominant or only questions educators ask. It must think critically about education's relationship to economic, political, and cultural power.

For more than three decades I have sought to uncover the complicated connections among knowledge, teaching, and power in education. I have argued that there is a very real set of relationships among those who have economic, political, and cultural power in society on the one hand and the ways in which education is thought about, organized, and evaluated on the other. As I mentioned in the Preface to the previous edition, *Ideology and Curriculum* is the first volume of a long series of books that I have written about these issues. It is the first volume of what some have called the two "Apple trilogies," although the second trilogy has now been extended to a fourth book. As the first, it is largely concerned with the dynamics of ideological domination. Later books devote more attention to the realities of struggles against dominance and to the ways in which new articulations of power are now operating.[1] It is very interesting, and certainly gratifying, to me that *Ideology and Curriculum* has been selected as one of the most important books in the history of Western education. I believe that this is due to the long history of groups that have strug-

gled for a more socially critical and democratic education in so many nations. That is, the book itself responds to the desires of millions of people in a considerable number of nations who believe that they have been denied the basic human right of a truly free and democratic process of schooling. In many ways these people are the real authors.

But the book also responds to the beliefs among many scholars in education that new and more socially critical perspectives are necessary to give the field of educational research more vitality. It is important to remember that what actually *counts* as educational research is a construction. Academic boundaries are themselves culturally produced and are often the results of complex "policing" actions on the part of those who have the power to enforce them. This "policing" action involves the power to declare what is or is not the subject of "legitimate" inquiry or what is or is not a "legitimate" approach to understanding it. Yet, as I say in the Preface to the second edition of *Ideology and Curriculum* and as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, it is the ability to "trespass" that may lead to major gains in our understanding.[2]

The continued development of a field—especially one as diverse as education—is often dependent on epistemological and conceptual "breaks" in which previous traditions are disrupted, displaced, and regrouped under new problematics. It is these breaks that tend to transform the questions to be asked and the manner in which they are answered. The "break" that *Ideology and Curriculum* provided centered around the development and use of a set of critical theoretical tools and cultural and political analyses that enabled us to understand the real functioning of curriculum, teaching, and evaluation much more honestly than before. These tools were based on two major concepts—ideology and hegemony—that had not had a long history of use in Western educational scholarship.

As I noted, over the course of writing the many books that followed the one you are about to read, I have refined both these concepts and their use. However, the concepts still have provided essential building blocks for critical analyses of the politics of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" knowledge. Of course it needs to be said that my arguments here are based on an understanding of a particular sets of countries. Thus, they cannot be automatically transferred to countries with different histories, although it has become clear over the years that the arguments provided in this book have resonated with the experiences of many dissidents and critical educators in a considerable number of nations. They too continue to be my teachers and I publicly thank them.

Although *Ideology and Curriculum* does not incorporate the story-telling style that characterizes parts of many of the books that came after it, rereading it reminded me of my own biography as both a teacher and political/educational activist. As someone who has taught or worked in inner-city and rural schools, it brought back the realities that helped shape me, many of which confront educators, students, parents, and activists in these communities every

day. These memories were both compelling and sometimes painful. I began my teaching career in the schools of a decaying urban neighborhood in the largely poor and working-class city in which I grew up. These were the same schools I had attended. It's an odd experience to reread one's own book and relive the experiences I had as both a student and a teacher there.

In *Educating the "Right" Way*,[3] I tell the story of one of these experiences, a story about one of my students, a sensitive but at times troubled boy named Joseph. I want to retell it here since it speaks to many of the reasons that *Ideology and Curriculum* took the form it did and why it stresses differential power and the role that education plays in legitimating it. Here is the story.

> Joseph sobbed at my desk. He was a tough kid, a hard case, someone who often made life difficult for his teachers. He was all of nine years old and here he was sobbing, holding on to me in public. He had been in my fourth grade class all year, a classroom situated in a decaying building in an east coast city that was among the most impoverished in the nation. There were times when I wondered, seriously, whether I would make it through that year. There were many Josephs in that classroom and I was constantly drained by the demands, the bureaucratic rules, the daily lessons that bounced off of the kids' armor. Yet somehow it was satisfying, compelling, and important, even though the prescribed curriculum and the textbooks that were meant to teach it were often beside the point. They were boring to the kids and boring to me.
>
> I should have realized the first day what it would be like when I opened that city's "Getting Started" suggested lessons for the first few days and it began with the suggestion that "as a new teacher" I should circle the students' desks and have them introduce each other and tell something about themselves. It's not that I was against this activity; it's just that I didn't have enough unbroken desks (or even chairs) for all of the students. A number of the kids had nowhere to sit. This was my first lesson—but certainly not my last—in understanding that the curriculum and those who planned it lived in an unreal world, a world *fundamentally* disconnected from my life with those children in that inner-city classroom.
>
> But here's Joseph. He's still crying. I've worked extremely hard with him all year long. We've eaten lunch together; we've read stories; we've gotten to know each other. There are times when he drives me to despair and other times when I find him to be among the most sensitive children in my class. I just can't give up on this kid. He's just received his report card and it says that he is to repeat fourth grade. The school system has a policy that states that failure in any two subjects (including the behavior side of the report card) requires that the student be left back. Joseph was failing gym and arithmetic. Even though he had shown improvement, he had trouble keeping awake during arithmetic, had done poorly on the mandatory citywide tests, and hated gym. One of his parents worked a late shift and Joseph would often stay up, hoping to spend some time with her. And the things that students were asked to do in gym were, to him, "lame."
>
> The thing is, he had made real progress during the year. But I was instructed to keep him back. I knew that things would be worse next year. There would still not be enough desks. The poverty in that community would still be horrible; and health care and sufficient funding for job training and other services would be

diminished. I knew that the jobs that were available in this former mill town paid deplorable wages, and that even with both of his parents working for pay, Joseph's family income was simply insufficient. I also knew that, given all that I already had to do each day in that classroom and each night at home in preparation for the next day, it would be nearly impossible for me to work any harder than I had already done with Joseph. And there were another five children in that class whom I was supposed to leave back.

So Joseph sobbed. Both he and I understood what this meant. There would be no additional help for me—or for children such as Joseph—next year. The promises would remain simply rhetorical. Words would be thrown at the problems. Teachers and parents and children would be blamed. But the school system would look like it believed in and enforced higher standards. The structuring of economic and political power in that community and that state would again go on as "business as usual."

The next year Joseph basically stopped trying. The last time I heard anything about him, he was in prison.

The personal account I have related here speaks to what has changed and what has stayed the same in the years since the first and second editions of this book. The account might be called a history of the present, a present so well illuminated in recent books such as Pauline Lipman's *High Stakes Education* and Linda McNeil's *The Contradictions of School Reform.*[4] An unyielding demand—perhaps best represented in George W. Bush's policies found in *No Child Left Behind*—for testing, reductive models of accountability, standardization, and strict control over pedagogy and curricula is now the order of the day in schools throughout the country. In urban schools in particular, these policies have been seen as not one alternative, but as the *only* option. In many ways, reforms of this type serve as a "political spectacle" rather than as a serious and well thought out set of policy initiatives that deal honestly with the depth of the problems now being faced in schools throughout the nation.[5] In fact, we are now increasingly aware of a number of the negative and even truly damaging effects of such policies.[6] Joseph's story is now being retold in the lives of thousands of children caught in underfunded schools. The global restructuring of markets, of paid and unpaid labor, of housing and health care, of communities large and small and so much more—all of this is having differential effects in terms of race and class and gender. And all of this has had profound effects on the financing and governance of schools, on what is to count as "official knowledge" and "good" teaching, and ultimately on the many Josephs who walk through the halls of the schools of our cities and towns.

Neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are in the driver's seat right now and this is not only happening in education. In his history of the dismantling of the crucial social and economic programs that enabled many of our fellow citizens to have a chance at a better life, Michael Katz argues that current economic and social policies have "stratified Americans into first- and second-class citizens and have undermined the effective practice of democracy."[7]

We cannot understand what has happened unless we connect this to transformations in urban political economies (although similar destructive tendencies are having powerful effects in rural and many suburban areas as well). The social and labor structures of large cities have, in essence, split into "two vastly unequal but intimately linked economies." These economies are intimately linked because jobs that are less well paid, nonunionized, often part-time, and with few benefits are required to make urban life attractive to the affluent. This is due not only to an increasingly globalized corporate sector that pits the workers of one nation against another and demands ever lower taxes no matter what the social costs to local communities, although such things are indeed crucial parts of any serious explanation. It is also due to the needs of affluent urban workers "who have created lifestyles that depend on a large pool of low wage workers." In Katz's words again, the result is a new "servant class." "Like corporations, affluent urbanites have outsourced their domestic tasks for much the same reasons of economy and flexibility and with much the same results"—poverty wages and an often heartbreaking exposure to the risks associated with no health care, no insurance, no unions, no childcare, and no social benefits.[8]

Yet, class relations do not totally cover the reasons for this situation. The political economy of race enters in absolutely crucial ways. As Charles Mills reminds us, underpinning so much of the social structure of American life is an unacknowledged *racial contract*.[9] Current neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies in almost every sphere of society—marketization, national curricula and national testing are representatives of these policies in education—have differential and racializing effects. While they are often couched in the language of "helping the poor," increasing accountability, giving "choice," and so on, the racial structuring of their outcomes is painful to behold in terms of respectful jobs (or lack of them), in health care, in education, and in so much more. For reasons of economy, health, education, nutrition, and so on, for black children, Latino/a youth, and so many more, the American city is often a truly dangerous place not only for their present but their future as well.[10] Yet we then ask the school to compensate for all of this.

My points here are ratified in Lipman's *High Stakes Education*, which provides a detailed examination of the effects of the dismantling and reconstruction of urban political economies and social networks on schools in our cities and towns, especially on schools that serve poor children of color. A better understanding of some of the less talked about and hidden effects of widely emulated school reforms, one that goes beyond the hype of "TINA" ("there is no alternative" to these tough policies), is absolutely essential for educators throughout the nation and the industrialized world. Lipman and others such as Linda McNeil have shown what actually happens to teachers and children when policies involving strict accountability, massive amounts of testing, and similar things get instituted. The results are striking and should raise serious

questions in the minds of all of those who believe that in these sets of policies we have found *the* answers to the problems that beset our schools. The results may certainly not be a more socially critical and democratic education that is connected to principles of thick democracy and social justice. Rather, such policies may re-create conditions that mirror many of those criticized in this book.

We tend to forget that "revolutions may go backwards." And what we are witnessing in education and in many other economic, political, and cultural institutions is exactly this—a politics that wants to radically shift our society so that it mirrors a supposed Eden that once existed. Well that "Eden" was the time of what some wise political commentators called "Satanic mills" and of a politics of cultural control that marginalized the lives, dreams, and experiences of identifiable people. This is a dangerous time and we need to face these dangers directly, if we are not to reproduce the histories, ideological tendencies, and conditions I trace out in this book.

The return to shallow understandings of science, the search for technical solutions based on this (mis)understanding of science, a new managerialism that relies on the massiveness of the resurgent regime of "measuring anything that moves in classrooms," the reduction of education to workplace skills and the culture of the powerful—these are things that are not fictions. We are facing them every day, sponsored by a government that seems intent on giving everything that ordinary people have struggled for over to the most powerful—and often simply rapacious—segments of this society. This must be stopped and education has a role to play in stopping it.

"Really" Beyond Ideological Reproduction

The arguments I made above lead to a crucial question. Is it possible to do something that is different, that interrupts neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies and ideologies, that has a very different politics of legitimate knowledge, and is one that is based on a very real commitment to creating schools that are closely connected to a larger project of social transformation? I think so.

The first and second editions of *Ideology and Curriculum* end with a section titled "Beyond Ideological Reproduction" that speaks to this in general terms, but over the years we have learned more about how such a counter-hegemonic politics can and does go on inside and outside of education. Let me give an example, one taken from Brazil, a nation where I have worked with progressive and socially critical educators for decades. My intense working with and learning from Brazilian activists and educators began in the mid-1980s, right after the military government that was supported by the United States was ultimately removed. It continued with my extensive interactions with Paulo Freire, and has become even more extensive with my efforts to assist and learn from the Workers Party in their attempts to build an education worthy of its name in Brazil.

One of the claims of these rightist forces is that schools are out of touch with parents and communities. While these criticisms are not totally wrong, we need to find ways of connecting our educational efforts to local communities, especially to those members of these communities with less power, which are more truly democratic than the ideas of "thin" democracy envisioned by neo-liberals. If we do not do this, neo-liberal definitions of democracy—ones that I discuss in much greater detail in the last chapter of this new edition and ones based on possessive individualism where citizenship is reduced to simply consumption practices—will prevail. While we need to be very honest about the fact that the current transformations in education, the current attacks on teachers' autonomy, working conditions, and wages, and the current ideological changes in the larger society may make it even harder for us to maintain and expand a truly democratic vision of education, this does *not* make it impossible.

What is happening in Porto Alegre, Brazil provides a powerful example of what is possible if we organize around a coherent set of democratic policies. After many years of electoral losses, the Workers Party has won consecutive elections in Porto Alegre and for a number of years had electoral control of the state of Rio Grande do Sol. One of the reasons it won was that it put forward a very different vision and set of policies for a more substantive set of democratic institutions. More democratic and participatory schooling was a central part of their proposals, as was an immediate and substantial increase in teachers salaries, because they knew that teachers would not support proposals that simply caused them to work even harder for salaries that were declining each year.[11]

The policies being put in place by the Workers Party, such as *participatory budgeting* and the Citizen School, are helping to build support for more progressive and democratic policies there in the face of the growing power of neo-liberal movements at a national level. The Workers Party has been able to increase its majority even among people who had previously voted in favor of parties with much more conservative educational and social programs *because* it has been committed to enabling even the poorest of its citizens to participate in deliberations over the policies themselves and over where and how money should be spent. By paying attention to more substantive forms of collective participation and, just as importantly, by devoting resources to encourage such participation, Porto Alegre has demonstrated that it is possible to have a "thicker" democracy, even in times of both economic crisis and ideological attacks from neo-liberal parties and from the conservative press. Programs such as the Citizen School and the sharing of real power with those who live in favelas (shantytowns), as well as with the working and middle classes, professionals, and others—and with teachers—provide ample evidence that thick democracy offers realistic alternatives to the eviscerated version of thin democracy found under neo-liberalism.

In many ways the policies and practices now being built there extend, in powerful and systemic ways, a number of similar reforms that are being built in other countries. Yet just as important is the pedagogic function of these programs in Porto Alegre. They develop the collective capacities among people to enable them to continue to engage in the democratic administration and control of their lives. This is time-consuming, but time spent in such things now has proven to pay off dramatically later on.[12]

The policies of the Popular Administration in Porto Alegre are explicitly designed to radically change both the municipal schools and the relationships among communities, the state, and education. This set of policies and the accompanying processes of implementation are constitutive parts of a clear and explicit project aimed at constructing not only a better school for the excluded—and for the teachers who work so hard in them—but also a larger project of radical democracy. While the reforms being built in Porto Alegre are still in process, what is being built there may be crucial not "only" for Brazil, but for all of us in so many nations who are struggling in classrooms and schools to create an education that serves *all* of our children and communities. Once again, Joseph is in the forefront of my consciousness as I write these words.

We don't have to look only to Porto Alegre for possibilities, however. In the United States there are outstanding examples of what can be done to counter rightist tendencies and to build an education that responds to the best, not the worst in us. Popular journals such as *Rethinking Schools* document what can be and is being done in real schools and real communities. The widely read book that James Beane and I published, *Democratic Schools*, contains honest and detailed examples of how critical educators, community members, and others—working together—have built counter-hegemonic possibilities that have stood the test of time.[13] But let us be honest; the fact that such possibilities exist, that education can go beyond the reproduction of dominance in important ways, is exactly that—a range of possibilities. If we do not continue to build on them, those in dominance will once again be able reproduce the conditions of their own power.

This is why in this new Preface I have tried to be honest about the complex forces that are having an impact on schools. Sticking our heads in the sand like ostriches will not make these forces go away. Neo-liberal and neo-conservative movements are—aggressively—altering our jobs and our schools. Their effects are increasingly dangerous. Yet as the example of Porto Alegre, the schools described in *Democratic Schools*, and the efforts of *Rethinking Schools* show, this is not only a time for pessimism. The possibility of constructing and defending much more critically democratic schools does exist. Teachers, unions, communities, students, and social activists have joined together to build such schools all over the world. Let us hope that the

same is true for other parts of world, including the United States where I live, as well.

Understanding the Present and Future

For historical reasons and for reasons I discuss in the Preface to the second edition, which is included here, the basic text of the original edition of *Ideology and Curriculum* remains unchanged. Yet this new edition contains some important additional material as well. I have included two new chapters. The first, "Pedagogy, Patriotism, and Democracy: Ideology and Education after September 11," connects the conflicts and tensions over education after the horrible events of September 11 to the dangers I discuss in the book. This chapter is rather personal because I believe that the questions of ideological conflict and struggles over power that this book deals with, though at times written in abstract ways here, are not abstract at all. The chapter speaks both to my own experiences during and after the tragedy, and to the hidden effects that the rightist resurgence that accompanied it have had on both the ideological struggles over and the governance of schooling even at a local level. As I shall show, race needs to play a crucial role in understanding the real effects of 9/11 on real schools.

The second additional chapter is an interview with me done with Michael F. Shaughnessy, Kathy Peca, and Janna Siegel for an international journal. The interviewers ask me to reflect on a number of crucial tendencies and relations of differential power that are currently moving education in particular, largely rightist, directions—what I have called "conservative modernization."

I have included this interview for a number of reasons. First, it has a pedagogic intent. Interviews force authors to be clear because speaking is not like writing. It's harder to hide behind the language of the academy when one is face to face with people who really want to know how and why you are critically interrogating an unequal reality. Because the interviewers ask me to lay out my arguments about some of the most significant ideological and material transformations now affecting educational policy and practice, to basically describe things I've written about extensively in later books such as *Cultural Politics and Education*, *Official Knowledge*, and especially *Educating the "Right" Way* and *The State and the Politics of Knowledge*, the interview can serve as a good brief introduction to these analyses.

There's a second reason for including it, and this has to do with the positive responses I received to an interview that was included as an appendix to *Official Knowledge*. Many readers thought that it was very useful because it helped to clarify a number of the points I was talking about, and because its more approachable style enabled them to better sense the author behind the words. No book is ever disembodied. Real people with backgrounds, lives, intuitions, arguments, worries, and perhaps not a few flaws, write books. And it's not a bad idea for readers to see this.

As in previous books, I want to include a way of contacting me so that I can learn from your thoughts, questions, agreements, and disagreements with this book. (Here's my email address: apple@education.wisc.edu) Like many others I am sure, one of the ways I personally learn is through discussions and debate with people who care just as deeply as I do about the lives and futures of students and their educators, as we all try our best to create educative experiences that make a real difference in schools and the larger society. *Ideology and Curriculum* may be a book that I first completed 25 years ago, but it is still very much a part of me. No book (and no author) is ever complete, and I welcome your comments.

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August 2003

Acknowledgments to the Third Edition

This new edition of *Ideology and Curriculum* comes at a time when the book is being celebrated as a "classic" in the literature in education. While the text has been associated largely with me, it is important to state that Barry Franklin and Nancy King played a significant role in making this book a lasting contribution.

Over the years since the first edition appeared, a considerable number of people in many nations have been my teachers about how one should critically analyze the limits and possibilities of education in societies like our own. I've acknowledged them in other books and thus shall not do so here. However, in doing this particular edition, there are friends and colleagues who do need to be singled out. Rima Apple, James Beane, Diana Hess, Bob Lingard, Steven Selden, Amy Stuart Wells, and Kenneth Zeichner all made very useful suggestions on specific parts of the new material included in this edition. As usual, the members of the Friday Seminar at the University of Wisconsin deserve thanks for their perceptive criticisms and support.

Let me also do something unusual here as well. An author knows that she or he has made an impact when one's opponents have to respond. For this very reason, I paradoxically would like acknowledge the conservative writers at the Fordham Foundation and in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal* for their rather vitriolic comments on my arguments in some of the new material included here. Oddly, that they responded in this way gives me hope for the future.

Finally, special praise needs to be given to Catherine Bernard, my editor at Routledge. In an era when everyone's work has become intensified, including the labor of being an editor at a major press, Catherine's advice and efforts were exceptional.

This edition is dedicated to Alexander Seth Apple and Alyssa Lee Cotton. I hope that the schooling they experience and the society in which they live will enable them to become the kinds of persons who cherish equality.

Preface to the Second Edition

Spencer was not wrong when he reminded educators that one of the most fundamental questions we should ask about the schooling process is "What knowledge is of most worth?" This is a deceptively simple question, however, since the conflicts over what should be taught are sharp and deep. It is not "only" an educational issue, but one that is inherently ideological and political. Whether we recognize it or not, curriculum and more general educational issues have always been caught up in the history of class, race, gender, and religious conflicts in the United States and elsewhere.

Because of this, a better way of phrasing the question, a way that highlights the profoundly political nature of educational debate, is "Whose knowledge is of most worth?" That this is not simply an academic question is made strikingly clear by the fact that right-wing attacks on the schools, calls for censorship, and controversies over the values that are being taught and not being taught have made the curriculum into what can best be described as a political football. When one adds to this the immense pressure on the educational system in so many countries to make the goals of business and industry into the primary if not the only goals of schooling, then the issue takes on even greater salience.

Educators have witnessed a massive attempt—one that has been more than a little successful—at exporting the crisis in the economy and in authority relations *from* the practices and policies of dominant groups *onto* the schools. If teachers and curricula were more tightly controlled, more closely linked to the needs of business and industry, more technically oriented, with more stress on traditional values and workplace norms and dispositions, then the problems of achievement, of unemployment, of international economic competitiveness, of the disintegration of the inner city, and so on would largely disappear, or so goes the accepted litany.[1] I predicted a rapid increase in these conservative tendencies when I first wrote *Ideology and Curriculum.* And while any author is pleased to see that her or his predictions were accurate, it is not with any real sense of joy that I note these events, for the conservative restoration that lies behind them is having tragic effects on many people not only in the United States but in other nations as well.

One thing these alterations and tendencies do help make very clear, however, is the fact that discussions about what does, can, and should go on in classrooms are not the logical equivalent of conversations about the weather. They are fundamentally about the hopes, dreams, fears, and realities—the very

lives—of millions of children, parents, and teachers. If this isn't worth our best efforts—intellectual and practical—then nothing is.

As a political activist, as a former elementary and secondary school teacher, and as a past president of a teachers union, for me these efforts came increasingly to focus on the political nature of curriculum and teaching and of education in general. *Ideology and Curriculum* represented one of the first major syntheses of these political issues. It seemed to me when I was originally writing it, and I am even more convinced now, that until we take seriously the extent to which education is caught up in the real world of shifting and unequal power relations, we will be living in a world divorced from reality. The theories, policies, and practices involved in education are *not* technical. They are inherently ethical and political, and they ultimately involve—once this is recognized—intensely personal choices about what Marcus Raskin calls "the common good."[2]

To be concerned with issues of power—in my case with how class, race, and gender inequalities work through schools in the control of teachers and students and in the content and organization of the curriculum—is to stand on the shoulders of the many women and men who helped form those of us who work for a more democratized society. Even though I believed that it was essential that we politicize these issues much further than had been done in the past, the questions I asked in this volume have their roots in a long tradition—in Dewey's and Counts's attempts to define a democratic education, in past moments of democratic curriculum reform, and in efforts to teach "the knowledge of all of us" rather than only elite knowledge in schools,[3] in Huebner's eloquent insistence that we cannot purge the personal, ethical, and political from the discourse of curriculum, in Greene's compelling arguments tor the "existential situatedness" of ourselves as educators. We must choose and we must act. There really is no other choice.[4]

Of course, we never act in a vacuum. The very realization that education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture makes this clear. After all, the decision to define some groups' knowledge as worthwhile to pass on to future generations while other groups' culture and history hardly see the light of day says something extremely important about who has power in society. Think of social studies texts that continue to speak of "the Dark Ages" rather than the historically more accurate and much less racist phrase "the Age of African and Asian Ascendency" or books that treat Rosa Parks as merely an African American who was simply too tired to go to the back of the bus, rather than discussing her training in organized civil disobedience at the Highlander Folk School. The realization that teaching, especially at the elementary school level, has in large part been defined as women's paid work (with nearly 90 percent of elementary school teachers and over 65 percent of teachers overall being women) documents the connections between teaching and the history of gen-

der politics as well.[5] Thus, whether we like it or not, differential power intrudes into the heart of curriculum and teaching.

By asking us to see education relationally, to recognize its intimate connections to the inequalities in the larger society, I am self-consciously aligning myself with a program aimed at what I earlier called "the common good." This program of criticism and renewal asserts the principle that "no inhuman act should be used as a short cut to a better day," and, especially, that at each step of the way any social program "will be judged against the likelihood that it will result in linking equity, sharing, personal dignity, security, freedom, and caring."[6] This means that those pursuing such a program "must . . . assure themselves that the course they follow, inquire into, [and] analyze . . . will dignify human life, recognize the playful and creative aspects of people," and see others not as objects but as "co-responsible" subjects involved in the process of democratically deliberating over and building the ends and means of all their institutions.[7]

As some of you may know, *Ideology and Curriculum* is the initial volume of a trilogy. It was followed by *Education and Power*[8] and *Teachers and Texts*,[9] as well as by a number of edited volumes that extended its original problematic and explored even more deeply the questions it raised, the actual content, organization, and control of curriculum and teaching, and student and teacher responses to these issues.[10] As the first volume, however, *Ideology and Curriculum* established the problematic. It set the path for all that came after it.

In writing *Ideology and Curriculum* I sought to do a number of things. First, I wanted educators, particularly those specifically interested in what happens inside classrooms, to critically examine the assumptions they had about what education does. These assumptions concern some very deep seated, but often unconscious, presuppositions about science, the nature of men and women, and the ethics and politics of our day-to-day curricular and pedagogic theories and practices. I strongly believed then and still do today that the major way to accomplish this critical examination is to place our institutions of formal education back into the larger and unequal society of which they are a part.

Second, I wanted to bring a particular conceptual, empirical, and political approach to bear on this task. This approach had to illuminate how education was linked in important ways to the reproduction of existing social relations. Yet at the same time, it had to avoid some of the mistakes of previous investigations of schooling in our kind of economy. It had to be critical and still resist the tendency to deal *only* with economic controls and "determinations." It had to speak directly to cultural and ideological dynamics that were not totally reducible to economic relations, even though they were clearly influenced by them.

Finally, I felt it was necessary to get inside the school and rigorously scrutinize the actual curriculum—both overt and hidden—that dominated the

classroom and then compare it to the commonsense assumptions educators had. My aim was to synthesize and reconstruct, and then go beyond, previous investigations of the social role of our widely accepted educational theories and practices. My arguments drew on aspects of "critical theory" and on some exceptionally insightful critical cultural and sociological work done in Europe to complement work already done by myself and others in the United States.

Behind all of these issues lay a particular set of questions. What is the relationship between culture and economy? How does ideology function? It is not enough to answer these questions in the abstract, however. As people concerned with education, we need to answer them in relation to one major institution, the school. Thus, we must rigorously scrutinize the form and content of the curriculum, the social relations within the classroom, and the ways we currently conceptualize these things, as cultural expressions of particular groups in particular institutions at particular times.

At the same time, and this is important for my arguments in *Ideology and Curriculum,* it is important to realize that while our educational institutions do function to distribute ideological values and knowledge, this is not all they do. As a system of institutions, they also ultimately help produce the type of knowledge (as a kind of commodity) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and cultural arrangements that now exist. I call this "technical knowledge" here. It is the tension between distribution and production that partly accounts for some of the ways schools act to legitimate the existing distribution of economic and cultural power.

My treatment of these issues is only in its initial form in this book and is expanded considerably in *Education and Power* and *Teachers and Texts.* But I hope it is clear enough for the reader to begin to see that what schools do ideologically, culturally, and economically is very complicated and cannot be fully understood by the application of any simple formula. There *are* very strong connections between the formal and informal knowledge within the school and the larger society with all its inequalities But since the pressures and demands of dominant groups are highly mediated by the internal histories of educational institutions and by the needs and ideologies of the people who actually work in them, the aims and results will often be contradictory as well. Whatever the aims and results, however, there are real people being helped and harmed inside these buildings. Wishful thinking and not confronting what may be some of the more powerful effects of the educational system will not make this fact go away.

In the years since *Ideology and Curriculum* first appeared, I have been more than pleased with its reception. The fact that it has been translated into many languages, that it is seen as a path-breaking book, and is widely read speaks eloquently I think to the honesty and openmindedness with which many educators, social scientists, policymakers, cultural and political activists, and others approach their tasks. Just as importantly, it also documents the constant

struggle by these same people to question their present conditions so that they may act in more responsible ways. Not to engage in such continual questioning is to abrogate one's responsibility to the current and future lives of the thousands of students who spend so many years in schools. Self-reflection and social reflection are joined here.

The perspectives embodied in the book you are about to read are most concerned with the forces of ideological reproduction. What is dealt with in less detail is a set of concerns involving what has been called contradictory tendencies, resistances, and conflicts over these ideological forces. That is, cultural and economic reproduction is not all that is happening in our educational institutions. Even though *Ideology and Curriculum* focuses largely on one moment of a larger historical progression—that of the politics of domination—I cannot see how we can begin to understand "how relations of domination, whether material or symbolic, could possibly operate without implying, activating resistance."[11] There are often people who, either singly or in organized groups, are now acting in ways that may provide significant bases for "counter-hegemonic" work as well. This should give us some reason for optimism, an optimism (without illusions) that is expressed and developed in my later books. The recognition of such "counter-hegemonic" work, however, means that analyzing the manner in which powerful conservative interests operate is even more important so that we can better understand both the conditions under which education operates and the possibilities for altering these conditions.

One other point needs to be made in this preface. Not only is the focus in this volume more strongly on forms of reproduction in education, it tends to stress class relations as well. Class dynamics are of immense significance and cannot be ignored. However, I have become more and more convinced that *gender* relations—and those involving *race,* which in the United States and in so many other countries are critically important—are of equal significance in understanding what the social effects of education are and how and why curriculum and teaching are organized and controlled. These arguments, as well, are elaborated at greater length elsewhere.[12] It is sufficient, I think, to note here only how the problematic first established in *Ideology and Curriculum* has been markedly expanded to include the ways the contradictory dynamics of gender, race, and class operate in all their complexity in our institutions and how they may be leading in progressive, not only retrogressive, directions.

Parts of the argument made here rest on a critique of liberalism as the framework for social policy and educational theory and practice. While these criticisms of liberalism are essentially correct, liberalism itself is under concerted attack from the right, from the coalition of neo-conservatives, "economic modernizers," and new right groups who have sought to build a new consensus around their own principles. Following a strategy best called "authoritarian populism," this coalition has combined a "free market ethic" with a

populist politics. The results have been a partial dismantling of social democratic policies that largely benefited working people, people of color, and women (these groups are obviously not mutually exclusive), the building of a closer relationship between government and the capitalist economy, a radical decline in the institutions and power of political democracy, and attempts to curtail liberties that had been gained in the past. And all this has been very cleverly connected to the needs, fears, and hopes of many groups of people who feel threatened during a time of perceived crisis in the economy, in authority relations, in the family, and elsewhere.[13]

These attacks, and the ease with which certain gains were lost, have led to a partial rapprochement with social democratic "liberal" positions. While liberal policies often acted to cover up the depth of our problems in education, the economy, and elsewhere, these policies did often include some real gains. Because of this, our approach to liberalism has to be more subtle. Our task is to defend the partial gains and rights won under the social democratic banner, and to expand and go beyond them to a more fully democratized economy, polity, and culture.[14] Thus, while I still agree with my analysis of the ultimate weaknesses of liberal positions in this book, the context has changed. In a context where even liberal policies and rights are threatened, we need to focus our attention more on the threats coming from the authoritarian populism of the right.

Let me discuss this just a bit more. The resurgence of conservative positions is an attempt to regain hegemonic power that was threatened by women, people of color, and others. One need only read the pronouncements of William Bennett, the former Secretary of Education of the United States—with its emphasis on a common culture based on "our" western heritage and on a romanticized past in which all students sat still and internalized "our" values—to understand how powerful is the current urge to regain a lost consensus over what counts as legitimate knowledge.[15] The questions surrounding what counts as legitimate knowledge and an analysis of the attempt to create a false cultural and political consensus lie at the very heart of this book. This makes many of its arguments about ideology perhaps even more important today than when they were first written.

The current call to "return" to a "common culture" in which all students are given the values of a specific group—usually the dominant group—does not to my mind concern a common culture at all. Such an approach hardly scratches the surface of the political issues involved. A common culture can never be the general extension to everyone of what a minority mean and believe. Rather, and crucially, it requires not the stipulation of lists and concepts that make us all "culturally literate," *but the creation of the conditions necessary for all people to participate in the creation and recreation of meanings and values.* It requires a democratic process in which all people—not simply those who are the intellectual guardians of the "western tradition"—can be involved in the deliberations over what is important. It should go without saying that this

necessitates the removal of the very real material obstacles—unequal power, wealth, time for reflection—that stand in the way of such participation.[16] As Williams put it:

> The idea of a common culture is in no sense the idea of a simply consenting, and certainly not of a merely conforming, society. [It involves] a common determination of meanings by all the people, acting sometimes as individuals, sometimes as groups, in a process which has no particular end, and which can never be supposed at any time to have finally realized itself, to have become complete. In this common process, the only absolute will be the keeping of the channels and institutions of communication clear so that all may contribute, and be helped to contribute.[17]

In speaking of a common culture, then, we should not be talking of something uniform, something all of us conform to. Instead, what we should be asking is "precisely, for that free, contributive and common *process* of participation in the creation of meaning and values."[18] It is the blockage of that process in our formal institutions of education, and its very real negative effects, that I wished to deal with in *Ideology and Curriculum.*

Our current language speaks to how this process is being redefined. Instead of people who participate in the struggle to build and rebuild our educational, political, and economic relations, we are defined as consumers. This is truly an extraordinary concept, for it sees people by and large as either stomachs or furnaces.[19] We use and use up. We don't create. Someone else does that. This is disturbing enough in general, but in education it is truly disabling. Leave it to the guardians of tradition, the efficiency and accountability experts, the holders of "real knowledge." As I demonstrated in this book, we leave it to these people at great risk, especially at great risk to those students who are already economically and culturally disenfranchised by our dominant institutions.

Part of the reason I took, and still take, these issues of cultural politics and empowerment to be of such importance is autobiographical. I came of age in a poor family (but *only* in the economic sense of that word), in a very poor neighborhood in a dying industrial city in the Northeast—Paterson, New Jersey. The all too real struggles and insecurities of working-class life, its forms of solidarity and its politics and culture in the face of this, all formed me in significant ways. I have too many memories of the ways this rich culture was degraded in the media, in educational institutions, and elsewhere. I am all too aware of how whatever I have made of myself is rooted in the feelings, sensibilities, and richly contextualized meanings of the women and men of that neighborhood to feel comfortable with an economic system in which profit counts more than people's lives and an educational system that—despite the immensely hard and all too little respected labors of the people who work in it—still alienates millions of children for whom schooling could mean so much.

I cannot accept a society in which more than one out of every five children is born in poverty, a condition that is worsening every day. Nor can I accept as

legitimate a definition of education in which our task is to prepare students to function easily in the "business" of that society. A nation is not a firm.[20] A school is not part of that firm, efficiently churning out the "human capital" required to run it. We do damage to our very sense of the common good to even think of the human drama of education in these terms. It is demeaning to teachers and creates a schooling process that remains unconnected to the lives of so many children.

These are, of course, complicated issues and, because of this, parts of *Ideology and Curriculum* are densely argued and I have sometimes made use of unfamiliar concepts. I end a more recent book of mine—*Teachers and Texts*—by calling for greater attention to the politics of writing, to writing in a way that makes one's arguments more accessible to the reader. In another way, however, it is important to realize that reality is very complicated, as are the relations of dominance and subordination that organize it. Sometimes understanding these relations requires that we develop a new language that may seem uncomfortable when first tried out. Learning how to use this set of concepts to look anew at our daily lives will take hard work, but it may in fact be necessary if we are to make headway in recognizing (rather than our all too usual misrecognizing) the contradictory ways education functions in our society.

Ideology and Curriculum was the result of nearly a decade long struggle to understand the politics of educational reality, and it shows the marks of that struggle in its concepts, language, and analysis. Yet so much of it still seems accurate and so many of the questions and issues it examines remain critical in a period of conservative restoration[21]—of what Aronowitz and Giroux call "an age of broken dreams"[22]—that I think on balance it was written as it had to be.

In *Ideology and Curriculum,* I sought to integrate into educational discourse a set of concepts and concerns that I believe continue to be essential to our deliberations about what and whose knowledge is of most worth. Much of my life as an activist, researcher, and teacher has been spent trying to bridge the artificial boundaries between, say, politics and education, between curriculum and teaching on the one hand and questions of cultural, political, and economic power on the other. These boundaries, as Pierre Bourdieu would say, are "pure products of academic reproduction."[23] The foundation of such boundaries is shaky on conceptual grounds and is immensely disabling if we are to deal with the political realities of schooling in an honest fashion. Hence, part of my method here is "trespassing," using tools built in critical theory, the sociology of knowledge, philosophy, and so on, and applying them to our commonsense thoughts and actions as educators. Again, following Bourdieu, "trespassing . . . is a prerequisite for . . . advance."[24]

This advance requires that the system of meanings and values that this society has generated—one increasingly dominated by an "ethic" of privatization, unconnected individualism, greed, and profit—has to be challenged in a variety of ways. Among the most important is by sustained and detailed intellec-

tual and educational work.[25] This work will not be easily done; after all, so much of the cultural apparatus of this society is organized so that we don't get a clear picture of what lies beneath the surface. Ten second "news bites" and "sound bites" can't convey this. In the face of this, it is even more important that we do the work of cultural excavation, of uncovering the positive and negative moments of power, and restoring to our collective memories what differential cultural power has meant to a society in crisis.

There are, of course, some risks in doing this. Criticism makes people uncomfortable, and often criticism needs to be aimed at oneself as well. Also, saying things that challenge commonly accepted policies and practices can adversely affect one's career, and this has predictably occurred a number of times recently to critical educators at universities and elsewhere.

That taking such arguments seriously is itself a political act was documented very clearly to me by the firing of a teacher who wrote a review of *Ideology and Curriculum* in a journal for teachers in a country in Asia that has a history of repressive regimes. It was again made clear when I was placed under a form of house arrest and prevented from speaking to certain people in the same country. Ideas are weapons (if you will forgive the militaristic and somewhat masculinist turn of phrase); and spreading them in authoritarian contexts is a subversive, sometimes dangerous, and yet utterly essential act.

Yet could we, as educators, do less? Our task is to teach and to learn; to take our inquiries as seriously as the subject deserves; to take criticism of what we say respectfully and openly; to hunger for it so that we too can be called upon to challenge and reformulate our own commonsense as we ask others—like you the reader—to challenge your own. The journey we are embarking on—what Raymond Williams so correctly called the long revolution[26]—requires such challenge and reformulation. It is a journey of hope, but one that is grounded in an unromantic appraisal of what confronts us as educators for whom democracy is not a slogan to be called upon when the "real business" of our society is over, but a constitutive principle that must be integrated into all of our daily lives. *Ideology and Curriculum*—with its limitations and silences acknowledged—is part of my journey on that path to cultural democracy. If it assists you as well, what else could any author wish for?

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Acknowledgments to the Second Edition

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It is usual in acknowledgments to say a few words about the dedication of one's wife and children. Yet I am afraid that words may not be enough to convey the debt I owe to my wife Rima, whose support, criticism, and continued tutelage in both the history of women and the history of science, have been so very important in my own growth. Her support, and those members of my family whose origins and political struggles against oppression have led to the search for my own political roots on the American left, have made this book a reality.

Finally, I want to dedicate this book to my sons, Peter and Paul. May both they and we be strong enough to enable them to stand on our political shoulders.

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B. Macdonald and Esther Zaret (eds) (Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1975). My thanks are due to Raymond Williams and *New Left Review* for permission to quote from "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (1973).