EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION
OF CAPITAL
This series assumes the ongoing relevance of Marx’s contributions to critical social analysis and aims to encourage continuation of the development of the legacy of Marxist traditions in and for education. The remit for the substantive focus of scholarship and analysis appearing in the series extends from the global to the local in relation to dynamics of capitalism and encompasses historical and contemporary developments in political economy of education as well as forms of critique and resistances to capitalist social relations. The series announces a new beginning and proceeds in a spirit of openness and dialogue within and between Marxism and education, and between Marxism and its various critics. The essential feature of the work of the series is that Marxism and Marxist frameworks are to be taken seriously, not as formulaic knowledge and unassailable methodology but critically as inspirational resources for renewal of research and understanding, and as support for action in and upon structures and processes of education and their relations to society. The series is dedicated to the realization of positive human potentialities as education and thus, with Marx, to our education as educators.

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Education and the Reproduction of Capital

Neoliberal Knowledge and Counterstrategies

Edited by

Ravi Kumar
For Rama
For her companionship and camaraderie
Contents

Series Editor’s Preface ix
Acknowledgments xv

Chapter 1
Neoliberal Education and Imagining Strategies of Resistance: An Introduction 1
Ravi Kumar

Chapter 2
Social Class and Rebellion: The Role of Knowledge Production in Capitalist Society 15
Curry Stephenson Malott

Chapter 3
How Shall We Live as Lambs Among Wolves?
Reason—Passion—Power and Organization: What to Do? 41
Rich Gibson

Chapter 4
Class, Neoliberal Capitalism in Crisis, and the Resistant and Transformative Role of Education and Knowledge Workers 63
Dave Hill

Chapter 5
Rethinking Schools and Society/Combating Neoliberal Globalization 101
David Hursh

Chapter 6
Education Toward War 113
Faith Agostinone-Wilson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Neoliberal Politics Impacting Education: Imagining Possibilities of Resistance</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravi Kumar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>The Struggle and Its Generalization: The Case of the University</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paresh Chandra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Learning Truth Telling: Beyond Neoliberal Education</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savyasaachi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Twenty-First-Century Socialism and Education in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: An Alternative to the Neoliberal Model</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Cole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Being, Becoming, and Breaking Free: Peter McLaren and the Pedagogy of Liberation</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter McLaren in conversation with Ravi Kumar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on Contributors</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing this preface in November 2011—things are moving fast; interesting times, indeed for the reproduction of capital. We are witnessing the unfolding of the most severe crisis of capitalism since the 1930s and it is displaying tensions and contradictions across the structures of globalized neoliberal capitalist systems. What emerged as a banking crisis in 2008 has now morphed into developing sovereign debt problems, threatening to trigger recession once again and the prospect of it spiralling into stagnation and global depression looms large. The atmosphere of crisis is expressed in myriad contexts across the full range of social, political, moral, philosophical, scientific, rational, and analytical dimensions. Simultaneously, prospects for left progressive critique, strategic analysis, and action are encouraging as the whole edifice of corporate finance capitalism is demonstrably under severe strain and, in some contexts, on the brink of collapse. There is little likelihood that the global elites will be able to patch together a swift enabling strategy for renewing their own forms of “growth” without adjustments, reform, and tactical regulation. Bank bailouts, sovereign debt crises and deflationary austerity policies serve to clarify once again the inequalities in the system, along with highlighted accompanying chaos and apparent intractable complexity in the management of finance capital’s necessary risks in pursuit of shareholder value maximization. Nationally, democratic forms once again disconnect with global markets and democracy itself seems to be out of sync with financial and economic institutional mechanisms. This is graphically illustrated in the US, for instance, where the constitutional system of checks and balances is in political logjam, while at the center of the European turmoil the ramifications of popular resistance to Greek “bail-out” proposals triggers political and economic managerial inertia with intractability of broader coordinated responses across the European Union. Makeshift “solutions” are promulgated, entailing state sponsored socialism for the rich and capitalism for the rest.
The chronic systemic contradictory nature of economic, financial, and political crises incipient to capitalism are resurfacing, ever more visible, and proliferating. Forms of popular resistance targeting sites and spaces of capital abound, not least as outrage at the deepening of social contrasts highlighting social insecurity profiled against conspicuous elite greed. Social and political “unrest” is the prospect for the foreseeable future.

Recognition of such issues can be formative for emergent radical will to power for remaking social relations of expansive human possibility following and developing Marxist analysis. The guiding thread must be the contradictions of capitalist political economy, the structures, forms, and processes of the ways in which value is created through routine exploitation, demutualization, and concomitant devaluing of the creators, while empowering property and accumulated value for corporate and individual *have*-*haves* at the expense of the *have-nots*, thereby devaluing humanity in general. Contradictory as ever, the system disempowers consumers *even as consumers* and is undermining the assumed liberal necessity and essential expansiveness of capitalism’s circuits of production even for possibilities of trickle down “redistribution.” The promulgation of austerity policies mean that, for instance, significant proportions of young people and their parents’ hope in the future is becoming ever more fragile. Thus, despite the expansion of access to higher education, whereby each new cohort of students has become distinctly better *credentialed* than the immediately previous generation, they can no longer aspire to the guarantee of social and economic well being and security of the standard of living in relation to that of their own parents. They face unemployment as well as devaluation of the credibility of their educational qualifications. Indeed, many parents themselves will be denied the comfortable old age they had come to expect as their social right. This is occurring not only in the heartlands of erstwhile prosperity, progress, and affluence but also ever more keenly in disadvantaged regions. In these contexts the fetishist mantra of social mobility is ever more readily exposed as an ideological charade, a myth of expansive equality through educational opportunity, while in reality a cloak for deepening social inequality and systemic social class consolidation. Such processes set the conditions of the possibility of anticapitalist class formation and political struggles across all areas of segmented social inequalities. However, such critical developments have yet to break *decisively* through and articulate across the terrains of neoliberal local, regional, national, and global hegemony. Anticapitalist, democratic socialist morale, while growing in many forms of actions
and debates, has yet to emerge on a sufficiently large scale for radical social movements to significantly reset social, political, economic, and moral agendas to effectively challenge the status quo and underpin progressive transformations at each level of state forms.

That said, radical social, moral, and political energy has surfaced across the globe, in a complex array of struggles for human rights, political freedoms, and forms of democracy, not least in emergent peripheral regions, most notably the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East. Coercion and acquiescence give way to nonacceptance, to street protest, taking through occupation material and symbolic spaces, extraordinarily courageous nonviolent actions, and, more rarely, armed struggles. However, it is vital to keep in mind that for each of these contexts, shock and crisis can and often do consolidate reaction, too. Among the dramatic crisis dynamics of social relations that capitalist production necessarily generates will be compliance and acquiescence as well as resistance. Not that resistance, as such, equates directly in Marxist terms to progressive class formation and class action. Creative resistance and modes of capitalist adaptation, appropriation, and cooptation can readily go hand in hand. Liberal repressive tolerance is ever available in multiple forms. Educational institutions, for instance, are rarely simply ideological state apparatuses free of directly repressive aspects (in Althusser’s terms). Punitive legal and physical enforcement and repression often hovers over and flows through such forms. For instance, rights to education and social welfare can be transformed into disciplinary mechanisms and effective top down strategies of domination in class struggle. These are powerful tactical and strategic devices operating directly and indirectly in, for and through the state and corporate power structures, constituting effective armories of demoralization and repression on behalf of the well-placed in this system of top down reinforcement of structures for capital accumulation.

Nevertheless, crisis developments serve as contexts and potential catalysts for democratic struggle. They help to clarify that capitalist progressive expansion of commodification has entered and thrived in all corners of human capacities and desires. Capitalism’s negative logics have put paid to conventional consumer aspirations in the cosmopolitan and globalized heartlands, reversing the processes of its expansion through embourgeoisification of the “middle” social layers. Proletarianization is potentially more visible but widely and simply misrecognized as evidence merely of reduction of relative expansion of life chances and consumption possibilities, whose significance is taken to threaten prospects for “growth” rather than
being identified as a fundamental systemic issues, and symptoms of deep contradiction. Thus, connections have to be made to understand and expose the essential dysfunctionality of the structures of capitalism and a key task is to show and popularize the weakness of its modes of dependence upon expansive profitability. A straw in the breeze, perhaps, but an encouraging cultural shift and polemical resource, nevertheless, may well be that the term “capitalism” has reentered common parlance and is being held up for critical scrutiny and debate in popular contexts and media beyond specialist academic and marginalized radical discourses. Capitalism is thereby less securely empowered in culture as the unspoken silent signifier for political economy of the-way-it-is, the TINA dispositional default which cancels possibilities for recognition or thinking through alternatives. This widens critical spaces for taking seriously the possibility for anticapitalist sentiments, analyses, actions, and movements and fundamental rethinking of what makes sense. There is a long way to go and it is foolhardy to rule out the manifold possibilities whereby the significance of critical economic and political manifestations may well give rise to funnelling more power to international globalized corporate capital, national elites and reactionary state powers. Expansive neoliberalism has shown few signs of serious atrophy or moving off the dominant policy agendas concerning social welfare, workfare, or all manner of public health and educational developments. Nor has attention to the ongoing consequences of climate changes and fundamental dimensions of social relations with the natural environment been progressed significantly. It is “on hold” at national policy levels due to preoccupation with apparently more pressing issues around financial and economic crises.

In their many guises and complexities, these considerations form a collective backdrop to this volume and its contributions to Marxist pedagogies of critique aimed at revitalizing the politics of resistance and anticapitalist class struggles in and as education. It assembles essays, analyses, personal testimony, and reflective commentary, providing materialist intellectual energy and analytical resources for identifying the potentially united powers of workers in all manners and at all levels of production in opposition to the structures of capitalist relations, institutional mechanisms, media, and outcomes. Such oppositional powers require integration for collective action, not least through coordinated social movements and broad based alliances, ever more effectively networking through internet resources. This includes artistic forms and fun, too, as materialist playful critical pedagogy of critique in which radicalizing situationist expression, for
instance, in creative street and other expressive forms and productive disruption are important as Marxist education, none of which is to be confused with ludic escapism and/or superficial self recrimination and identity work. All such tactics are working toward integrating strategies for generating political and cultural challenges to the dominance of capital.

The logic and coherence in diversity across these chapters support struggles in and for a transformed democratic and socialist public sphere. In these terms, and deploying a variety of Marxist critical forms, each chapter provides valuable resources for reporting and critically seeing through the empirical manifestations of the dominant mode of capitalist production. Topics and focuses include neoliberal experience in India; pedagogy, curriculum, structural reform in and around education and its devaluation into *schooling*; radical organization and practices of educational workers; academic production as radical commitment, including autobiography and rearticulating the personal and the political; possibilities and limits of digital technology for de commodified critical education; ongoing revolution in and through education in Latin America; education/military complex in the United States; the UK and US neoliberal heartlands and threats to ensuring a sustainable and just future; reason and passion harnessed in radical educational work, and more. They recognize, illuminate, and critique the creative destructive powers and exuberance of capitalism (celebrated, indeed, by Marx, himself), now deeply embedded globally in *turbo-capitalist* mode. They thus contribute to the continuous and developing legacy of the Marxist educative traditions addressing materialist immanent, ideology, and explanatory critique of the dominance and legitimacy of the capitalist mode of production. Put in Gramscian terms, they provide analyses, illustrating practices and possibilities in cultural and economic struggles in and for progressive hegemony. As such, these themes are united in and constitutive of radical *educative praxis*. They are formative, supportive of working through capillary forms, across multiple cultural layers and spaces and enabled through a variety of media. Thus, anticapitalist momentum is enhanced through critique, engagement, and confrontation, supportive of stubborn resistance, making connections and spreading confidence in productive discontent for building potential energy and resources for democratic socialist reconstruction. They serve to underpin pedagogic action in the organizing processes and oppositional structure building for what Marx referred to as *educating the educators* (Marx, 1845). They express critical praxis, not just as moments of cultural representation, nor simply as methodologically
“interesting” and intellectually engaging epistemologies for alternative ways of thinking the world, but as formative practices in creating critical and transformative reality, too. They are simultaneously instantiating performative ontology and counterpoints to grim fatalisms. In dialectical mode, the agenda of anticapitalist class formation *in itself* is thus emergent in the work of these authors through moments in dialogue they constitute as structures and dynamics of anticapitalist ontology, all material to conditions of possibility for realizing formation of *class for itself*.

Finally, it is important to recognize that radical hope, while vital, if relied on alone, is hopeful. So far as Marxism and education is concerned, *Marxism as education*, educating the educators in and through socialist struggles, the practical business of dialectics requires occupation and labor movement coordination, street work, workplace and community organizing, articulated with political activism *in production to transform the dominant relations of production, distribution, and exchange*. Such is the broad agenda in all its complex ramifications for achieving progressive changes attuned to the breaking waves of the ongoing present. Each of the moments of this work contributes to the objective of empowerment as a renewal of the spirit and practices of the *commons* in which the condition for *individual liberation* requires the fulfilment of *emancipation of all* through open-ended democratic socialist practices. This book is a very welcome contribution to advancing these *educative* struggles in and for disrupting and transforming the reproduction of capital.

**ANTHONY GREEN**

November, 2011

**Reference**

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