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Article

Some Conceptual Problems with Critical Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

One of the scholarly debates of the last decade has been about the discourses of pedagogy and pedagogy's function in society. As a result, pedagogy has been critically theorized, conceptualized, and analyzed, resulting in a body of work that adheres to the importance of understanding the human subject in pedagogy. Liberatory pedagogies, particularly critical pedagogies, are concerned with students who traditionally have been marginalized in school. Using a blend of autobiography and criticism, this article examines the case of an often marginalized group, disabled students, and asks whether they are present in the texts of critical pedagogies. The article concludes with a discussion of the tensions between inclusive theory and inclusive practice and, finally, suggests the constraints under which inclusive practices operate.

As is any text, this one is multilayered. It is laced with autobiographical moments and related theoretical analyses. In a sense, this text represents the story of a life, my life, as a mother, special education teacher, public school inclusion facilitator, teacher-educator, disability rights advocate, disability studies scholar, and "rabid inclusionist" (Ferguson, 1995). This is a highly personal account of the search for pedagogy coherent with my beliefs, my experiences, and with the aesthetic meaning I give to those beliefs and experiences. Another layer, though, is a scholarly one that examines the problems I find with critical pedagogy after a long and disappointing search for a pedagogy that offers personal freedom to construct oneself and one's place in the world to the greatest extent possible. These accounts, their intersections, contradictions, and ambiguities are very much my lived experiences and I attempt to represent them as an autoethnography, or a way of placing my experiences within a theoretical context (Ellis, 1997). If at times this text seems to resonate with two or more different or unblended voices, it is because I have yet to integrate fully myself with the pedagogy I have sought and the pedagogy I have found.

Although I have attempted to do so, I worry I have failed and that I can only offer a story of self and pedagogy that requires you, the reader, to blend the voices if you can.¹

A LIVING, BREATHING PEDAGOGY

Over the last two decades, pedagogy has been theorized, conceptualized, analyzed, and criticized (Shrewsbury, 1987; van Manen, 1990; Luke & Gore, 1992; Giroux & McLaren, 1994; McLaren, 1995; Wardekker & Miedema, 1997). We often turn to dictionaries and encyclopedias to define our terms and when I began this project, I first queried *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* wherein pedagogy is defined as

culture-specific ways of organising formal teaching and learning in institutional sites such as the school. In contemporary educational theory, pedagogy typically is divided into curriculum, instruction, and evaluation. . . . Pedagogy entails a “selective tradition” of practices and conventions. (Luke & Gore, 1994, p. 566)

This view of pedagogy, as occurring in an institutional setting and categorized structurally by curriculum, instruction, and evaluation, is a conventional, modernist approach to defining pedagogy where pedagogy has clear boundaries, or institutional sites, and formal, functional structures. Other approaches to conceptualizing pedagogy are more abstract or ambiguous, view pedagogical sites in multiple ways, and argue that pedagogy is a way of being, or that it is living with or parenting children. Yet a third way of approaching pedagogy is to consider it as text or, rather, to consider that there is nothing outside of text in pedagogy. Gregory Ulmer’s (1985, p. 158) application of Derrida’s textuality to pedagogy suggests that pedagogy is a discursive process of writing reality. This conceptualization of pedagogy relates well to pedagogical theories that connect pedagogy and identity (Woollett & Phoenix, 1992; Luke, 1996; Wardekker & Miedema, 1997). van Manen notes that the ambiguities and anxieties of parenting also are present in pedagogy. He writes that

as soon as we gain a lived sense of the pedagogic quality of parenting and teaching, we start to question and doubt ourselves. Pedagogy *is* this questioning, this doubting . . . something more fundamental to our being human is required. To be able to *do* something, you have to *be* something. (van Manen, 1988, p. 447)

van Manen’s suggestion is that pedagogy involves meaning making and that it is situated in connections between doing and being. This view is somewhat consistent with John Dewey’s claim about the relation between knowing and doing (Dewey, 1938, 1926, 1934).

Pedagogy with a caring ethic requires teachers to be human, to accept the constructive process of doing something like meaning making, to recognize the definitional challenges and ambiguities of being and doing, and to be mindful of the need to establish and maintain caring relations. Nel

Noddings claims that “our efforts must, then, be directed to the maintenance of conditions that will permit caring to flourish” (Noddings, 1984, p. 5). Caring for students is also one of the central tenets of bell hooks’s engaged pedagogy, in which she notes that pedagogy entails “car(ing) for the souls of our students,” by “teaching them how to live in the world” and seeing them as “whole human beings” (hooks, 1994, pp. 13–15). hooks sees engaged pedagogy as more demanding than other pedagogies because engaged pedagogy requires the well-being of students and teachers, welcomes dissent, accepts conflict, and encourages resistance. Engaged pedagogy is a risky proposition, an act that assumes shared vulnerability between teachers and students.

In summary, I view pedagogy as text, as does Ulmer. More specifically, pedagogy is a living, breathing text of experience that allows the narration of pedagogical stories to take any turn and possess any value as long as they are the turns and values of the pedagogical narrators. It also allows a relational understanding of pedagogy as a form of caring for or transforming others and oneself, as a way of living together in community. In this sense, pedagogy is a product of the social discourse between diverse individuals rather than a manuscript of discourse about discourse. Students and teachers give life to a textual, relational pedagogy. The human pedagogical subject is the notion to which I turn in the next section.

WRITING THE PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECT

In the previous section, I explored some aspects of the textuality of pedagogy, or what I consider the autobiographical necessity of pedagogy. I relationally conceptualize pedagogy borrowing van Manen’s metaphor of parenting, Noddings’s ethic of caring, and hooks’s notion of engagement, all of whom claim that human beings and their social relations are at the heart of pedagogy. In this section, I elaborate on the idea of pedagogical subjects (i.e., teachers and students, but students in particular), and the importance of permitting subjects to write themselves in pedagogy. This is a difficult discursive feat to perform, however, because I cannot find a way to talk about such matters without, in effect, writing the subjects about which I talk. I have chosen to confront this challenge by using the most general terms possible, whenever possible, and later in this section, I provide the framework for this strategy.

In its definition of pedagogy, the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* does not describe a human pedagogical subject. The subject is teaching, learning, site, curriculum, instruction, practice, convention, or evaluation. Rather than a living, breathing being, pedagogy is an object, a thing that can be manipulated by educators. Ulmer assumes that the subject is a pedagogical text. van Manen, hooks, and Noddings, on the other hand, clearly view the subject as the people engaged in pedagogy. Within these later pedagogical theories, the pedagogical subject has, as has been implied, a certain sovereignty. Teachers and students, these theories hold,

must be free to define their selves within the pedagogical world. John Dewey's argument in this arena is that there is an "aesthetic rhythm" that is "a matter of perception and therefore includes whatever is contributed by the self in the active process of perceiving" (Dewey, 1934, p. 163).

The rhythm to which Dewey refers is the dance between *doings* something and *being* someone. Here, Dewey puts an aesthetic spin on the modernist, functionalist view of pedagogy and on what postmodernists and some criticalists argue textually, ethically, or politically. Whether we conceptualize the self as free to write or narrate, as having rights, or as perceiving itself, the intent is the same and is a dialectical and aesthetic one: the self experiences and, therefore, constructs meaning that, in turn, creates the self. The pedagogical subject is a dialogical self, a narrator, an autobiographer, an embodied perceiver, a political actor, culturally bound yet still an individual.

As an example of pedagogical autobiography, or, as Dewey might argue, an aesthetic of self, we can consider the following conversation I recorded six years ago with my teenage daughter who was 13 at the time and considered by doctors and teachers to be significantly mentally retarded.²

- Susan:* (Speaking on the telephone to a social worker) Yes, Tiffany is disabled. Three of our children are disabled.
- Tiffany:* (Overhearing her mother) No! Not me!
- Susan:* Why yes, Tiffy, you are disabled.
- Tiffany:* No! No!
- Susan:* (After ending the telephone conversation) Tiffy, it's OK to be disabled. April is disabled. Bob is disabled.³ Mom is disabled.
- Tiffany:* No! Not me!
- Susan:* Do you think there's something wrong with having a disability?
- Tiffany:* No.
- Susan:* Do you agree that April has a disability?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Do you agree that Bob has a disability?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Do you agree that Mom has a disability?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Is it OK that we have disabilities?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Then, why isn't it OK for you to be disabled?
- Tiffany:* 'Cuz not! Not me!
- Susan:* Tiffy, are you saying that you are not disabled?
- Tiffany:* Yes. Not.
- Susan:* Do you have spina bifida?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Do you use a wheelchair?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Is it really hard for you to read and count?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Do you sometimes have trouble saying your words?
- Tiffany:* Yes.
- Susan:* Then, that means you are disabled.
- Tiffany:* No! Doesn't!
- Susan:* (Reluctantly) OK, Tiffy. I will have to agree. You are not disabled.
- Tiffany:* Good.

It is unfortunate that Tiffany's gestures and tone of voice cannot be captured in print because it would emphasize the indignation she demonstrated at the idea that I was calling her disabled. Though diagnosed with "severe mental retardation," Tiffany had a clear sense of self and she resisted anyone, even her mother, who contradicted that sense. It is also unfortunate that my nonverbal responses to Tiffany's protestations cannot be shown here. This was the first time I had realized that Tiffany did not view herself as a disabled person, or someone who "has a disability."⁴ I was stunned and my questioning demonstrates my efforts to tease out her thinking and to come to terms with her views and their differences from my own. This conversation also reveals my tacit conceptual dissonance. While at the time of this conversation I was openly adhering to a social conceptualization of disability, as a cultural construction resulting from discrimination against people and not an innate individual deficit, I clearly was enacting a deficit understanding of disability as I debated with my daughter. To make my point about disability, I pointed out those things she did poorly or not at all (e.g., talking, reading, writing, walking) and referred to the "deficits" in her siblings and in me. Fortunately, this argument was unconvincing to my daughter, who apparently did not use her impairments or limitations to construct her identity.

It is a common belief that "disabilities render [individuals] incompetent to practice sovereignty of the self" (Longmore, 1997, p. 134). Yet, in the above conversation, Tiffany appears quite competent to "practice sovereignty of the self." In light of my conversation with my daughter, how might we better understand disability or not-disability? Can we imagine the possibility that people like Tiffany, who have significant cognitive differences, might have the capacity to construct the self and to participate actively in the pedagogical process?

I propose that the answer to these questions is that, of necessity and to the greatest extent possible, pedagogy must not conceptualize the subject. The subject should not be preformed as belonging to a particular race, or sexuality, or (dis)ability, or class prior to the pedagogical relationship. Rather, the pedagogical subjects (teacher and student) must emerge within interactions in the pedagogical community. This is essential even in younger students, where teachers make assumptions about children before children have a clear and articulated sense of self. For example, my youngest daughter's racial history is African-Japanese American, but she considers herself African-American. For many years her father and I tried to explain to her that she had African- and Japanese-American racial heritages, but by the age of eight, she clearly viewed herself as African-American. The mixture of her coffee-with-cream colored skin and her almond-shaped eyes makes her a beautiful blend to her father and me but to her, she has always been an African-American young woman. If we had persisted in our efforts to have her identify as African-Japanese American as a young girl, what would that have communicated about her freedom to understand her life and how might our pedagogical relationship have been damaged? How might continued parental protestations have altered her aesthetic rhythm? In a

pedagogical community, at least as much as in a family, it would seem students must be supported in constructing their selves, their presentation of self to others, and their sense of their relations with others. And in a pedagogical community, at least as much in a family, we should recognize the potential for insensitivity to what students have to say about themselves.

Sandra Harding wrote that she would “count as lesbian all those women who have adopted the term for themselves” (Harding, 1991, p. 251), recognizing that number would be too few for some, too many for others. The consequences of Harding’s proposal for lesbian thought are significant because of the importance of privileging the perspective of the individual while balancing that with the political reality of social life. Harding writes that

for lesbians to name themselves and their worlds as they wish, an autonomy that women—especially marginalized women—are all too often denied. The right to define the categories through which one is to see the world and to be seen by it is a fundamental political right. (Harding, 1991, pp. 251–52)

Is it possible that the same must be argued for anyone in school, including disabled people? In my daughter’s case, does it make sense to count her as nondisabled because she did not view herself as disabled?

It depends. If calling a person “disabled” means we have identified that person as having something innately wrong, some deficit that needs to be remediated or treated educationally, then it does not make sense to count Tiffany as nondisabled. But that does not ease the discomfort some might feel in forcing a label on someone who resists it as strongly as she did. Perhaps the disability studies community can be of assistance here. There is a great deal of consensus among disability studies scholars that disability is not a sign of an innate deficit or weakness. Rather, in very general terms, disability is an identity a marker that signifies one’s place in the world, one’s position in society (Peters, 1996; Linton, 1998; Gabel, 1997; Gabel, 1999). Others go even further and consider disability to be a sign of oppression (Abberley, 1987, pp. 5–19; Shakespeare, 1997; Shakespeare & Watson, 1997; Barnes & Oliver, 1995). To call someone or oneself disabled is to acknowledge that one is referring to an oppressed person. Oppression, they argue, comes in many forms, including segregation, under- and misrepresentation, and social discrimination. More recent disability studies scholars have taken a postmodern turn (Marks, 1999; Corker, 1999).⁵ My own conception of disability has evolved in large part from years of reflection on that significant conversation with Tiffany so many years ago. I now interpret disability as an aesthetic (1997, 2001), in the sense that John Dewey uses the aesthetic (Dewey, 1938, 1926, 1934). Put quite basically, Dewey argues that the aesthetic is the meaning given to experience. By saying disability is an aesthetic, I mean that I view disability as the interpretation of oneself and one’s place in the world constructed by one’s experiences in the world and informed by the responses of one’s world to the way one lives in the world. The aesthetic accounts for the ways the self is created through power relations but also accounts for the resistant self.⁶

An aesthetic of disability recognizes the discrimination or oppression facing disabled people, but it also does something else. It recognizes the valued meanings derived from one's particular way of living in the world (e.g., belonging to a community, having a unique perspective on the world or oneself), thus my preference for the aesthetic in my work. The aesthetic allows disability to be a self-selected identity or set of meanings, but of course this is not often the case. Admittedly, self-selected identity is a rather idealistic constructivist view and will not necessarily play itself out in lived experience, but one of the fundamental arguments later in this article is that there is an unavoidable discontinuity between theory and practice. So while resisting discontinuity might be futile,⁷ at least to a certain degree, discontinuity should not halt attempts to construct more and more useful theories nor should it prevent us from moving toward continuity if we believe in the value or usefulness of theoretical contributions.

The aesthetic, however, does not fully resolve the discursive problem. Throughout the remainder of this article I use phrases like "diverse ability" and "ability diversity" to refer to the full range of cognitive, physical, and emotional expressions of being human. I do not use this phrase as synonymous with disability nor do I want it interpreted as a euphemism or synonym for disability. In fact, I see disability and ability diversity as quite distinct. Disability refers to an individual with a particular aesthetic who either self-identifies as disabled or who is an oppressed person because of the social consequences of a particular condition or way of living in the world. On the other hand, I use ability diversity to refer to the range of cognitive, physical, emotional, and perhaps even behavioral ways humans interact with and live in the world. My implicit argument is that ability diversity should be considered among other diversities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, culture, etc.), whereas disability should be considered as a status of oppression or identity that usually stigmatizes an individual but that preferably involves consent. Only recently have I learned that Tom Shakespeare (1996), in the United Kingdom, made this claim the year prior to my first work on an aesthetic of disability. As with disability, race or gender can also place one in a stigmatized position but none of these are inherently problematic. Social or cultural forces make them problematic. Diversity, then, is the umbrella concept and within diversity we find ability diversity, racial diversity, gender diversity, and other variations.

Now we return to the tension in my argument. While I state that the pedagogical subject should enter, unwritten, into the pedagogical relationship, I give an example of a disabled person (labeled so by conservative educational standards) who does not want to be called disabled. In the remainder of this article I observe and manipulate this and other tensions and ultimately demonstrate my belief in the impossibility of fully alleviating such tensions at this time. Briefly, though, let me elaborate that the tension is partially resolved by accepting that we can allow a subject to write the details of the self but we cannot avoid making general assumptions if we are to conceptualize or communicate at all. For example, Sandra Harding would have people self-identify as lesbian but she allows a priori that there

is sexual orientation diversity. To borrow Harding's strategy, I can allow people to self-identify as disabled but I can assume there is always ability diversity. Fleshing out sexuality or ability, among other things, is the ambiguous, messy work of pedagogy. This means that very general assumptions can be made as pedagogical relations emerge. We can assume that those of us in pedagogical relation will be of diverse races and genders and sexualities. We will speak diverse languages or hold diverse cultural values. And we will have diverse abilities. As time goes on and we write our pedagogical narratives, some of us will write female selves, Asian selves, or lesbian selves. We all will write multiple selves. Tiffany might have written an African-American female self who thought it was "not fair" that she could not walk and who loved to ride rollercoasters. I would write a white heterosexual mother of four adult children who has been married 21 years, and a disabled woman who experiences depression. Of course, we would write much more but these might be our first narrative lines.

If the pedagogical subject is discursive, at least in a metaphoric sense, then it is a subject in the process of writing itself and of being interpreted by others.⁸ Discursively speaking, and as much as possible, the subject should be an autobiography. Dorothy Smith writes that "locating the subject in one's everyday world means locating oneself in one's body and material existence" (Smith, 1987, p. 97). Indeed, the subject of pedagogy must be located within the everyday world and must be embodied in a material (physical) existence, even when textuality is used as a conceptual tool. To argue that disability is a sign of oppression or that it is an identity marker or an aesthetic requires us to position the disabled individual within a real world, and living in a real body, as a member in some kind of real community. For example, it is not enough to argue that Tiffany's authorship of her identity as a nondisabled person is sufficient and that her choice to be "a person" should be honored at home and school. There are material things that must be done to accommodate her at home and school that cannot be ignored, regardless of her self-constructed identity. Later we will return to this problem of the material world and its dialectic with the conceptual world.

CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS

Can we locate a pedagogy wherein discourse is as liberatory as possible, where caring yet vulnerable and risky relations exist, and where pedagogical participants are narrators of their own texts? Will this pedagogy recognize and account for students and teachers of diverse abilities? To complicate matters, could this pedagogy include people who need a significant amount of assistance in schools, who need to be fed or diapered or who communicate primarily with eye or head movements? The pedagogical conundrum of social transformation for people with the need for this kind of support is this: they want the right to be autonomous beings in an unbiased world but they count on others for physical and/or cognitive

assistance to exercise autonomy. The problem is not that such individuals cannot or do not have a sense of self or place in the world. It is that those of us who interact with them often do not know how to do what is necessary to understand their views of self and place.

It would seem that critical pedagogy offers the best chance of reaching the goal of a fully inclusive pedagogy that accommodates opportunities to write the self and live in free relation to others. Critical pedagogy's interest in social transformation and the abolishment of marginalization or oppression certainly seems consistent with the notion that disabled people are in some way oppressed or marginalized and that the social conditions of schools need to be transformed. However, while critical pedagogy is interested in liberatory practices and values freedom in the classroom, I see several conceptual problems within its theoretical frameworks. My discomfort with critical pedagogy, then, is because I fear that unless it thoroughly accounts for people with diverse abilities at the stage of theorizing, it cannot adequately begin to account for them at the point of practice. The first problem I find is related to the absence of particular subjects in critical pedagogy: disabled people and people with diverse abilities who do not identify as disabled. In its favor, critical pedagogy's aversion to oppression might be coherent with the position that accounts for the perspectives of disabled people when they view themselves as among the marginalized or when they count themselves as members of a minority. Further, the early inability of critical pedagogy to move beyond critique and to propose practical solutions to social problems has been addressed by recent critical theorists but the remedy has not confronted the ways critical pedagogy can attend to ability diversity (Wardekker & Miedema, 1997; McLaren, 1998).⁹

Unfortunately, when critical pedagogy describes its subjects, people with diverse abilities generally are not in the discourse and their absence causes problems for the practical implications of critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire's work is an example. As do most critical pedagogical scholars, Freire omits ability diversity in his discourses about pedagogy. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one of Freire's (1970/1994) basic concerns is for the development of skills that lead to self-liberation. I think of these as sociocognitive skills because Freire's approach requires students to be able to "critically consider reality" and to "transform . . . structures (of oppression) so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (p. 55). Freire argues against an "empty 'mind' passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside" (p. 56), and assumes that given the proper education people can transform themselves to be active critics who oppose oppression. Through Freire's work in literacy education, we know he sees literacy as an important tool for the exercise of freedom. Unfortunately, Freire never explores how critique and self-transformation play themselves out in the lives of self-identified disabled people, particularly people with significant cognitive disabilities, or in the lives of people with diverse abilities who do not identify as disabled.¹⁰ If he had considered ability diversity as he mapped out the earliest critical pedagogy, he might also have suggested what many disability studies scholars have purported: that nondisabled people are the

people who need to change. The conditions generally associated with disability, these scholars would argue, do not innately carry with them the problematic social consequences of those conditions. Disability is the result of the oppression of people with those conditions: the segregated systems preventing equitable access to knowledge and technology (Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986; Kaye, 1997; Kaye, 2000), the employment discrimination keeping most disabled people in poverty (Governor's Planning Council, 1987, 1992; Behrmann, 1990), the institutionalization of disabled adults based on faulty assumptions about the preconditions for "independent living" (Rioux & Bach, 1994; Monga, 1996; Taylor, 2000; Trupin & Rice, 1995). I want to be clear on this point. I am not against Freire's work nor his notion of conscientization. I do, however, believe it is insufficient without considering disability theory and the problems caused by people and social institutions who do not attend to ability diversity.

Peter McLaren, another strong proponent of critical pedagogy, has written that pedagogical discourses can "demonize" others through absence or deviance (McLaren, 1994, p. 214). He, too, ignores disabled people and ability diversity, at least in the sense about which I am talking. McLaren often argues the need for liberation of people of oppressed races, ethnicities, genders, or classes but does not include disabled people in his lists of the oppressed unless he is referring to the overrepresentation of students of color in special education (McLaren, 1995, pp. 26, 32, 47, 50, 69, and so on). In a 1998 article McLaren's use of "disability" reveals his conception of disability and I believe that conception constrains his own ability to account for disabled people. He writes,

The Marxist educational Left has, for the most part, carefully ensconced itself within the educational establishment in an uneasy alliance that has *disabled* its ability to do much more than engage in radical posturing, while reaping the benefits of scholarly rewards. (McLaren, 1998, p. 431, emphasis added)

Here, McLaren uses "disabled" in its modernist, positivist sense and in contradiction with the way postmodern and social constructionist disability theorists use the term. McLaren's use indicates a deficit understanding of disability, as something that impairs or interferes with one's ability, yet I have already indicated that in disability theory, we are now understanding disability as a social construct with potentially oppressive consequences that depend on the cultural contexts within which people live.

One might question whether McLaren's is an innocuous use of a term with no theoretical implications but I would argue that the ways we use terms and understand people's experiences in theory have significant consequences for the enactment of theory into practice. My own enactment of the deficit view of disability with my daughter is an example of such a consequence. Who knows how many practical decisions I made as her mother based on my adherence to a view of disability that I explicitly disowned but tacitly enacted? Further, who knows how many prejudicial decisions I made as a special educator based on a deficit view of disability?

As another example, if a theoretician considers disabled people as innately deficit, the next step too easily becomes thinking of their segregation or marginalization as warranted (or at least as unquestioned) or considering them less able to benefit from subject matter teaching. In effect, it becomes more logical to exclude disabled people who are deficit than if they are considered oppressed or marginalized. At the very least, adherence to a deficit conception of disability allows that some people are “disabled” or “have disabilities” because of their innate characteristics. Put another way, if we reflect on van Manen’s statement that you have to *be* something in order to *do* something, we might realize that viewing an individual as *being deficit* limits our ability to imagine what that individual can *do*. On the other hand, if theoreticians understand disabled people as members of a marginalized group who have distinct ways of interacting with their world, the next step is to imagine how they and their distinct ways of living in the world alter our theorizing and, subsequently, our practice.

Later in his article, McLaren proposes a “per-formative” critical pedagogy “grounded in the lived experiences of students.” He continues,

Critical pedagogy, as I am re-visioning it from a Marxist perspective, is a pedagogy that brushes against the grain of textual foundationalism . . . and the monumentalist abstraction of theory that characterizes most critical practice within teacher education classrooms. I am calling for a pedagogy in which a revolutionary multicultural ethics is performed—is lived in the streets. . . . Teachers need to build upon the textual politics that dominates most multicultural classrooms by engaging in a politics of bodily and affective investment, which means “walking the talk . . .” (p. 452).

This gets closer to my desire for a critical pedagogy because it does, in fact, appear grounded in lived experience. This is an active pedagogy but still, it does not necessarily account for ability diversity in schools because the examples given, of class, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation, are all assumed to be of people with relatively homogeneous abilities. If this were not true, we would see ability diversity in the list, at least sometimes. If this were not true, we would see contemplation of how “walking the talk” might look and feel because of the inclusion of people with diverse abilities in the thoughts of the writer. It might look different because some of the people envisioned would be operating wheelchairs, or wearing diapers, or using computers to communicate, or getting nourishment through feeding tubes. It might feel different because it could entail listening to people who use digitized voice, or communicating with someone through an interpreter, or walking more leisurely down the street to keep pace with companions whose gait is slow, or reconsidering the flow of lesson plans to accommodate students who process information differently. The rhythm, the time, and space of life can be different when one lives with people who interact, move through, or communicate with the world in diverse ways. Critical pedagogy might even be theorized differently so that class issues were considered from the perspective of disabled people who are generally unemployed or underemployed and who usually live in poverty (Governors

Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, 1992; Gerber, 1990). Adequate employment services for disabled people or people of diverse abilities can look and feel quite different than those for people who are marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Interestingly, many disabled people are people of color, female, gay, or lesbian, and every racial, ethnic, or gender group has members with diverse abilities, so the problem of theorizing is complicated by the intersection of these markers or lived experiences.

To be clear, the previous arguments about McLaren's misuse of "disabled" and the rhythm and pace of life in an ability diverse world are not solely arguments with an individual scholar's work. If we accept that scholarly products contribute to theory, then these are theoretical matters, arguments with theory or, rather, with insufficiently constructed theory. Once again, I am claiming that the use of our terms reflects, informs, and sometimes limits the ways we understand or imagine people's experiences. My own experience has demonstrated that these are not solely problems of thought or theory, but of the ways our ideas play themselves out in the world.

One certain result of the absence of disabled people from liberatory pedagogies is that liberatory pedagogies incorrectly assume that all marginalized people are represented in the educational communities in question or that representation does not require significant alteration of ideas about those communities. It is assumed that given a mere ideological shift, ability diversity will be accommodated. This is not necessarily true. People with diverse abilities may need marked changes in curricula, teacher expectations, school buildings, social structures, and classroom organization in order to participate fully in classroom life. Again, the necessary transformation is of society and schools, not people with diverse abilities.

Some have argued for liberating disabled people, for example, by moving them into fully inclusive classrooms and schools, but, again, I counter that inclusive communities require more than an ideological shift or new sites for learning. Inclusivity requires a commitment of resources of time, money, energy, and supplies: time and energy to alter the ways pedagogy is conceptualized; imagination to create applications of liberatory pedagogies to ability-inclusive educational and community contexts; commitment to a pedagogy that includes students who may wear diapers, who drool, who may be uninhibited, or who will never read and write but who can think and learn. It requires a fundamental shift in the way we plan and enact teacher education, particularly in the ways we prepare teachers to understand, come to know, and teach "all" students. This elusive pedagogy I seek must also accept the possibility that full inclusion, in a material sense, might not soon be available for every student, or that it might not be possible for every pedagogical context as contexts are construed today, or it might not be preferred by every student. I am not arguing for segregated education. Rather, I am arguing for a more inclusive liberatory pedagogy that recognizes the limitations of the "real world" while attempting to transform the world. Here we return to the tension between a pedagogy of identity or self and its conflict with the material world.

My daughter Tiffany, for example, did not view herself as disabled. However, her physical condition required highly specialized care, even in school. As parents, her father and I came to recognize that it would have been unsafe and unrealistic to insist that she be schooled in fully inclusive contexts, given the conditions under which she attended school. This was a difficult decision for us because we wanted to honor her preferences and we felt torn between what Tiffany wanted for herself, what her schools were willing or able to provide, and how far we were able to push by investing our time, energy, and other resources to “fight” for what she wanted. In effect, we had to conduct a cost-benefit analysis: to decide between keeping our family intact by concentrating on family life, good parenting, and maintained employment, or risking one or more of those, or our daughter’s well-being, by engaging in battle. I still struggle to understand the remnants of deficit thinking about disability that influenced my choices at the time and wonder if perhaps my energy for a “fight” was weakened by those remnants. However, in retrospect it is clear to me that it was not enough to insist on her right to an inclusive education when it would risk the health of the family unit. It is true that many people with needs similar to Tiffany’s have successfully been included in the general education community but I suspect that many of them have been included at great personal cost to families. Here, too, the problem was external to my daughter. She was willing and able to take risks and be included, given the right support systems, but the system refused to budge without the expulsion of major adversarial effort on our part.

Still another problem is found in the central metaphors of critical pedagogy. The metaphor of voice is one place to start. Taken at face value, this metaphor seems to accommodate disabled people and accounts for ability diversity but the fundamental question at issue is “what diversity do we silence in the name of ‘liberatory’ pedagogy?” (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 101) not whether we can empower, give voice, and dialogue (*ibid.*, pp. 90–119). Some feminist theorists have stated that not everyone can claim to know the ends-in-view for others. Even more importantly, however, not everyone can participate similarly, nor can we fully appreciate the impossibility of knowing someone else’s experiences, even when they attempt to share them with us (*ibid.*, p. 91). At first glance, the stance against the dominance of some voices over others seems exactly the right attitude for conceptually including ability diversity. The problem here is that critical pedagogy assumes that pedagogical subjects have voices that are recognized and understood by others (Ellsworth, 1992; McLaren, 1995). Voice is used as a metaphor for representing one’s self to others in culturally acceptable ways, typically by reading and writing. If a student does not read or write, critical pedagogy assumes that the innate ability is there and that it merely needs to be brought out with the proper pedagogical methods. In this sense, liberation involves social and educational changes that make learning to exercise one’s voice possible. However, I am unable to determine that any thought has been given to the problems of participation of students with diverse

abilities who exercise voice differently than it is defined in educational theory. How can pedagogy be liberatory, or offer as much freedom as possible to construct the self, for people who do not write or talk or read or walk or use the bathroom without assistance?

Timothy Lensmire (1998) examines the conception of voice in the writer's workshop and critical pedagogy literatures. In critical pedagogy, according to Lensmire, voice is not found, rather, it needs to be heard, empowered. It is a socially embedded voice that must be questioned and must accept interrogation. Lensmire claims there are problems with this conception of voice: it requires a static, stable subject; it does not view voice as "under construction." He concludes by offering a conception of voice that addresses these problems. He writes, "I propose that voice be conceived of as a project involving, *appropriation, social struggle, and becoming*" (ibid., p. 279). Voice, he argues, is the active construction of one's self through these processes. Appropriation involves the negotiations between one's self and the world that create the developing individual. Social struggle suggests that the use of voice requires hard work, an effort to find and fight for one's place in the world. Finally, becoming is a "refusal . . . to merely repeat the old" (p. 285) but rather to maintain a momentum toward something or someone yet to come. Lensmire convincingly writes that "the risk of 'becoming unrecognizable' is also the risk of not being *recognized* as a competent, worthy student" (p. 283). By this point in his article, it seems as though Lensmire is directly addressing the relations between voice and diverse abilities. Yet, when it comes down to concretizing voice, or telling us what voice actually is, the examples Lensmire gives are of people speaking and writing in homogeneous ways. The problem here is similar to the problem I find with McLaren's contribution to critical pedagogy, particularly McLaren's use of disability as a deficit. Lensmire's reconception of voice is limited by a narrow understanding of the ways voice is expressed. If voice is not more fully explored, how will we facilitate or support the appropriation, social struggle, and becoming of ability diverse students?

Attempts to be pedagogically inclusive of people with diverse abilities require the reinterpretation of voice so that it is recognized that some voices are softer or less articulate than others. Some voices may be accompanied by drooling or stuttering. Perhaps those voices are exercised one word at a time, as was Tiffany's. The voices of people with significant cognitive limitations, for example, might be mumbled and misunderstood as grunts or unintentional gestures, or might be expressed in nonverbal behavior such as running away or crying or hugging. Rather than thinking about voice as the use of conventional literacies to represent the self, critical pedagogy needs to consider voice as any attempt, even unrecognized or difficult to interpret attempts, to represent the self, regardless of whether they are enacted in conventional ways. Referring back to that seminal conversation, my daughter represented her self quite eloquently using one or two words at a time. Her words, in fact, communicated much less than did her facial expressions, the tone of

her voice, and the way she crossed her arms in mild defiance when she disagreed with me.

Critical pedagogy is also limited by its implicit assumption about difference. Some critical discourses have argued similarly to Chandra Mohanty (1994), that “the central issue . . . is not one of merely acknowledging difference; rather, the more difficult question concerns the kind of difference that is acknowledged and engaged” (p. 146). This question of difference is usually posed in relation to gender, race, even sexual orientation and is assumed to be a discourse about differences that do not involve physical or cognitive ability diversity to any significant degree. My argument here is consistent with and yet extends McLaren’s: that the absence of people of varying abilities in generalized discourses about pedagogy demonizes them. By their absence they are deviant. From deviance we too easily slip into coercing people into the disability identity. Rather than acknowledging and celebrating differences of ability, critical pedagogy has ignored such differences and thus has constructed theoretical discourses that assume relatively similar academic ability among all pedagogical subjects. In the end, we are still left with the same conceptual problems: insufficient representation, faulty assumptions about ability and competence, narrow conceptions of how voice can be exercised and recognized, inadequate ideas about diversity.

What prevents scholars from exploring ability diversity? Perhaps it is a clinging belief that there are significant innate differences between people of varying abilities and that these differences require significantly different pedagogical theories, including theories of the self. Perhaps it is difficult to understand disability from the standpoint of identity, or oppression, or an aesthetic. Perhaps it is the general discomfort felt when interacting with people with whom we have not interacted before. It certainly is true that throughout academic history most educational scholars have sharply divided their work between scholarship about disabled people and scholarship about everyone else and, consequently, there has been very little work done to blend the two subfields and their contrasting paradigms (Pugach & Warger, 1996; Danforth, 1997, 1999; Sasso, 2001). So, while liberatory pedagogy has been conceptualized for students with relatively similar abilities, it has been more difficult to paint disabled students or students with diverse abilities into the pedagogical picture. Only a few articles have done this with any detail and these tend to refer to students in special education (Slee, 1997; Rhodes, 1995; Goldstein, 1995). It becomes even more difficult to construct a pedagogical view of freedom in a classroom community wherein students with significantly diverse abilities are full and active participants. It is at least as difficult to construct a pedagogy that includes students with significant physical differences who may require total physical care, who may drool, whose limbs may jerk uncontrollably, or who may wear diapers. These people, it would seem, are too different to be incorporated into the critical pedagogical discourse unless that discourse places them in classrooms with other people “like them.” This seems to be the case even in light of claims about difference such as the one made by bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress*:

Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth. (hooks, 1994, p. 113)

In the next section, I address some of the challenges to an inclusive critical pedagogy. I am interested primarily in the challenge of discontinuity to which I referred earlier. Is it acceptable, I wonder, to have a pedagogy with some degree of discontinuity between its theoretical and practical discourses? And if acceptable, under what circumstances?

DISCONTINUITIES

Given the stance that it is impossible to have complete continuity between theory and practice in a postmodern era, the pedagogy I seek temporarily accepts discontinuity between conceptual and material terrain but does so while anticipating movement away from discontinuity whenever possible. Furthermore, it hopes for the construction of theory that eventually can be more useful and more applicable to practice. It stands against thinking about pedagogical subjects with diverse abilities as belonging to separate categories. Simultaneously, this pedagogy admits the challenges of inclusion in the real world and recognizes the possibility that diverse people have diverse preferences and needs. Therefore, liberatory pedagogy must be conceptually inclusive while it is also pragmatic about the real world of teaching and learning and the interests and desires of students and their families.

The early stance of critical pedagogy is that liberation is freedom from coercion, or power relations, and that it demarginalizes groups who traditionally have been marginalized. Two prominent critical theorists taking this early stance were Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux (1995). Feminist theorists have argued that this is an unrealistic stance and more recent critical pedagogy reads differently (Lather, 1991; Luke, 1996; Ellsworth, 1992; Luke & Gore, 1992). Some have claimed that liberation is the discovery of self through carefully nurtured resistance to power relations. Herbert Marcuse did this in 1978 in *The Aesthetic Dimension*. In light of my claims that critical pedagogy should account for people with diverse abilities and also disabled people, it follows to ask whether conceptual inclusion necessarily requires the practice of full social and physical inclusion. In other words, if we conceptually account for diverse ability in critical pedagogy, must we then, in all cases and without critical interrogation, practice full inclusion?

I propose that the theoretical and practical implications of this question are at the heart of the omissions of critical pedagogy. On one hand, the liberatory stance inclines one to feel acceptance toward disabled people. This is the tendency of those who are concerned about marginalization, power, justice, and social transformation. On the other hand, it seems untenable to reconceptualize critical pedagogy to account for the full range of diverse abilities because, to remain consistent, critical pedagogy must

then support the complete and unquestioned social and physical inclusion of all people for whom it has managed conceptual inclusion. That could be unimaginable, particularly if one adheres to the deficit view of disability and the assumption that ability diversity of necessity requires the assignation of some people to the category "disabled." If disability is a deficit rather than a self-constituted aesthetic, or a sign of oppression, then it is easier to accept the segregation of disabled students in school. I suspect that the real debate, then, is less about intellectually including ability diversity and more about the practical consequences of intellectual inclusion. Contrastingly, the debate could also be framed as the dilemma over whether segregated pedagogical contexts (e.g., full- or part-time special education services or programs) necessarily require conceptual segregation. Taken further, perhaps the debate should be about the labeling process required to gain access to special education services. That, in itself, can be a form of coercion. Is it ethical, we might ask, to have an inclusive pedagogical theory while inconsistently practicing inclusive pedagogy?

I suggest that at this time the answer to this question is both yes and no and here is the crux of the problem of discontinuity. When answered "yes," certain conditions must be satisfied and under those conditions it must be recognized that power relations may have forced a negotiated settlement. When answered "no," it is because in an ideal world there would be no discontinuity between inclusive theory and inclusive practice. Unfortunately, and as stated earlier, complete continuity is improbable. The conditions to satisfy for an ethical discontinuity return us to my earlier discussion of the conceptualization of pedagogy. If pedagogy can be understood textually and people of all abilities in schools are authoring their own texts, including writing the stories of how and where they are educated, and with whom they interact at school, then their stories may include learning in special education classrooms or in special schools, regardless of whether full inclusionists agree. My firm stance is that forced inclusion is as coercive as forced segregation. We cannot wish away the material realities of today's schools by forcing students and families to accept inclusive education without regard to contextual matters. The question here becomes, "Who is authoring the pedagogical text for students and are students and their families permitted co-authorship in the pedagogical community of their choice and to the greatest extent possible?" If given a choice, my daughter Tiffany would have chosen to be in a regular classroom. Her school could have accommodated that choice, at least to a certain degree, if it had believed in Tiffany's right to make that decision for herself. On the other hand, my Japanese-African American daughter, April, has schizophrenia and strongly prefers a quiet, structured setting away from the complexities of regular education classrooms. When she was 17 and thinking about returning to school after a long absence, she told me, "I hope I'm in a special class, Mom. Those regular classes stress me out." I have learned that she must be given control over where and when she interacts with others because, more than anyone else, she has the sense of what she can and cannot handle and where she chooses to invest her energies.

If pedagogy is also understood as a way of becoming, a means of constructing meaning about one's self, one's relationship and representation to others, and one's interaction with one's world, pedagogy has its own flavor grounded in relational experiences. This flavor is the aesthetic rhythm to which Dewey refers, the caring ethic to which Noddings refers, and the living together in the world to which van Manen refers. As a relational process with an aesthetic rhythm, the liberatory power of pedagogy lies in the interactions between members of the learning community.

We now come to what could be a politically incorrect claim. It is one that I reach through a good deal of intellectual trouble because I began this project with strong belief in inclusive education and with a sense of myself as a "rabid inclusionist." The relational pleasure and pain of pedagogy is possible in *any* classroom if it is a place where participants choose to share their lives and their passions as they intimately discover who they are and who they are becoming.¹¹ And in *every* classroom, liberatory or oppressive, choices can be limited by teacher disposition, constrained by the lack of material resources, or compromised for the "greater good." As a communal place, the liberatory classroom encourages, even expects, students and teacher to struggle together to pursue their goals. Part of that struggle is the negotiation of choice. On the other hand, both general and special education classrooms can be sad, repressive places where teachers exert control over vulnerable students. The first question is not whether a student is in an ability diverse inclusive classroom. The first question is whether the student (and his or her family, when age requires it) want to be where they are and whether that classroom is a place where students and teachers are free to struggle to become new people and to live self-constructed lives as much as possible.

Granted, one significant challenge to critical pedagogy in the special education setting is in the ways disabled students are conceptualized. The very foundation of special education assumes a preformed subject. To be placed in special education one must be evaluated, diagnosed, and assigned a treatment plan that includes some type of special education service, whether direct or indirect, whether partial pull-out or inclusion. Special education processes, then, conflict with my claim that pedagogy must avoid conceptualizing the subject but must allow the subject to emerge from pedagogical interactions. To again use Harding's notion, we should count among the disabled those who claim that identity for themselves. This challenge, however, does not need to undermine the revision of critical pedagogy. Rather, it illuminates the need for reform in education. The realization of the conflict between special education processes and critical pedagogy speaks to general problems in education and should not prevent critical pedagogy from embracing ability diversity.

Another challenge is in figuring out how to listen to and accommodate the preferences of students with diverse abilities, particularly when those preferences are in conflict with inclusive educational ideology, policy, or practice. Conceptual inclusion does not necessarily require indiscriminate inclusive practices. To repeat, that would be just another form of blatant,

unexamined coercion and would be antithetical to the critical tradition. Rather, conceptual inclusion requires sensitivity and openness to the needs of all students, and insists that we make educational decisions based on student needs and preferences whenever possible rather than a need for ideological consonance. Perhaps the problem is not whether to do away with special education to maintain conceptual and practical consistency. Again, I argue that this is impractical in many of today's schools. Rather, the problem might be whether we can accept the dialectic tension between conceptual inclusion in liberatory pedagogy and the need expressed by many educators, families, and students for the continuum of educational services that special education offers with regular education. We can even consider the possibility that the continuum is necessary until theory and practice catch up with inclusive philosophy and ideology, or until inclusive thought is able to effect sufficient systems change.

CONCLUSION

My analysis indicates that even the most liberatory and inclusive pedagogical theory ignores or minimizes ability diversity in its discourse. In fact, it is difficult to find any mention of disabled students or teachers or people who represent the full range of diverse abilities outside the literature devoted to special education. One major exception to this is Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant's (1997) examination of high school textbooks for representations of disabled people.¹² A few liberatory pedagogical scholars include disabled students in the list of marginalized people but do not use fleshed-out examples of marginalization or liberation that include disabled students or those with diverse abilities.

I have attempted to generate some explanations for the problems of omission of ability diversity in critical pedagogy. I am persuaded that the omissions are the combined result of the tendency of caring scholars to construct consistency between theory and practice when it comes to ability diversity and an a-critical stance toward the deficit model of disability and all its trappings. In response, I have proposed that critical theory does not necessarily require uniform enactment for every marginalized group. In fact, this is impossible. While critical scholars argue for empowerment of racial, ethnic, gender, or other "minorities," these same scholars have avoided conceptualizing "empowerment" for people who need specialized care or instruction in school. My claim on this point is that critical pedagogy might look different under different circumstances and in response to diverse needs but that critical pedagogy, regardless of its site and social milieu, has some consistent characteristics. Although pedagogical sites are important, site is not the sole criterion for critical pedagogy, and even in an inclusive site there is no guarantee of liberatory or transformative practices. Perhaps more important for students are the pedagogical relations and the ways power and voice are used in the pedagogical contexts within which they find themselves. Put simply, any student can tell us what liberation looks

like to them and we should listen and then, to the greatest extent possible, make it happen.

My goal has been to intentionally plot the discontinuity rather than to accept or reject it without question. I concluded this analysis by mapping out the general conditions under which it could be temporarily acceptable for theoretical and practical pedagogies to be discontinuous. Critical pedagogy certainly must be concerned with the physical safety of students but too often safety has been used by educators and families as an excuse for segregation. Critical pedagogy must be fluid enough to account for individual preferences, interests, and needs and must accept the possibility that under particular circumstances, segregated special education might be the most liberatory option, or at least it might be the less oppressive option. These conditions can be understood through the metaphor of voice and through the interrogation of the purposes and intents of the educational decisions made for students with diverse abilities. Furthermore, as with other human relations, pedagogy is not an either/or proposition: rather, it operates along a continuum between the end points of total oppression or total liberation.

Putting the above conditions into print causes me to experience both excitement and fear. I am excited that there might be a way for me to intellectually live with critical pedagogy while acknowledging the dilemmas and constraints of the material world. In contrast, I am fearful that my claims will be misinterpreted as excuses for segregating people against their will or slowing the progress toward inclusion for which activists have long fought. Some readers might misunderstand my arguments as supporting the continuation of our current system of special education, or as suggesting that disabled people in schools need to be protected from taking risks. Other readers might interpret my argument to mean that I am waffling on the right of disabled people to full inclusion in social institutions. On the contrary, I am making a transformative claim about education, that we must shift the balance of power so that educational decisions about ability diverse students can be shared by students and their families, and by students' dreams for the future. This means that some of us must walk the fine line between moving forward with the inclusive society and refraining from coercive strategies, while others of us must recognize that inclusive policies and practices depend in large part on systemic capacity and educators' commitments to be inclusive.

In conclusion, although critical pedagogical discourses are appealing, critical pedagogy cannot be considered fully inclusive until its discourse begins to account for people of diverse abilities. Accounting for diverse ability means considering the ways learning communities will be configured differently with members who differently express "voice," whose pace of life or movement through time and space are highly diverse, and whose bodies look and function in diverse ways. Perhaps most dramatically, considering ability diversity requires us to quiet dogmatic discourse and listen for the preferences and interests expressed by people who have a wide range of preferences and interests. It must also be remembered that just as

“granting voice to girls” is an add-on and add-ons do not change the fundamentally masculinist nature of critical pedagogy (Luke, 1992, p. 32), adding-on ability diversity is also problematic. Pedagogical scholarship, across the board, needs to address the contexts of people with diverse abilities and should ensure their inclusion in the theoretical debates about liberation.

At question is whether ability diversity is represented in critical pedagogy, whether scholars have grappled fully with the problems of representation or nonrepresentation, and whether we can accept, at least for now, the discomfort of discontinuity between theory and practice. This brings me full circle, back to my first challenge to my readers to help me make sense of my story of pedagogy and self. Just as pedagogy is a means for writing the self, so is this text and in this text I am exposed as someone who finds no resolution, who only sees dissonance and conflict at every turn and with every idea.

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NOTES

1. Donald Polkinghorne suggests that inviting the reader to assist in the interpretation is one method of reporting qualitative research (Polkinghorne, 1997).
2. In very general medical or clinical terms, “significantly mentally retarded” refers to a person whose intelligence and adaptive behavior are significantly below that of the average individual. Many disability studies scholars reject the terms “mental retardation” or “mentally retarded” and I have not used these without discomfort. However, in this context, and for the purposes of clear communication, it seems necessary to use such terms in order to be clear about Tiffany’s differences.
3. April and Bob are Tiffany’s siblings.
4. As do other disability studies scholars, I make the conceptual distinction between *being* disabled and *having* a disability. To say one has a disability is to accept that disability is caused by some innate deficit. In disability studies, referring to someone as *being disabled* represents disability as an identity, a constructed social status, or a symbol of oppression. In other words, society disables people and disablement can be related to having limitations or impairments, but being disabled is a social consequence of particular ways of living in the world. Society disables people by erecting barriers, creating discrimination or oppression, and assigning stigmatized social status to people. Theoretically, a person with some kind of limitation or impairment who does not experience discrimination or oppression and who rejects the disability

identity is not a disabled person. Many disability studies scholars reject people first language (e.g., “student with a disability”) because it is an artifact of the deficit view of disability.

5. Simi Linton (1998) argues that disability is a political category that allows disabled people to “let their freak flags fly” (p. 32). Most of the work on the oppression strand has been done in England. For a seminal reference on oppression as a model for understanding disability, see Paul Abberley (1987). Mairian Corker (1999) contributes to postmodern disability theory by arguing for a discursive model of disability that accounts for the dialectic between the individual and society, material reality and subjective interpretation of experience.
6. I am particularly indebted to Herbert Marcuse (1978) for his work on aesthetic resistance in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, which I explore more fully in “An Aesthetic of Disability” (Gabel, in press).
7. The Borg, television’s communitarian cyborgs seen on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, are known for saying “resistance is futile.”
8. Dorothy Smith (1987) writes about this, as do the authors in David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s (1997) volume. Quite a few works from gay/lesbian theory address this, including Harriet Malinowitz (1992).
9. I regret that I was not able to integrate the work of Nirmala Erevelles (2000) into this article. I read her article just as I was completing my own. It is an excellent example of very recent critical pedagogy that speaks to the issues of concern in my work.
10. I intentionally use the example of significant cognitive disabilities for two reasons: (1) for many people it is more difficult to imagine a pedagogy that includes people with significant mental retardation than it is to imagine pedagogy for people with physical, but not cognitive, limitations, and (2) pedagogy is inextricably linked to learning and learning is linked to cognition, therefore cognitive disablement seems to be a good touchstone for an inclusive pedagogy.
11. I hope it is obvious in the context of this article that my use of “choice” does not assume an absence of power relations that limit free choice.
12. I discovered this chapter as I was completing revisions of this article, which is why Sleeter and Grant are not given earlier credit.

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