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## BOOK REVIEW

Cameron McCarthy & Cathryn Teasley (eds) *Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education: Redirecting Cultural Studies in Neoliberal Times*, New York, Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, 361 pages, ISBN 978-0-8204-9731-0

*Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education* is a productive collection of essays seeking to broaden the perspectives of cultural studies. Writing from 'the intersections between popular culture, race, public policy, and the neoliberal times in which we live,' these authors broadly engage a neo-Gramscian awareness of hegemony and Foucauldian assumptions about governmentality to insist upon the specificity of diverse lived experiences of increasingly skewed global power relations. Bidding adieu to post-Fordist sentimentality, they extol the necessity for global citizenship and universal justice and they call for creative new responses to the corporate 're-feudalization of the public sphere' that is currently thwarting these ideals.

The essays in this volume argue that the apparatuses of education are implicated in the continually shifting cultural formations of a place, as well as being embroiled in the state's processes of control. Further, this volume discusses the global ramifications of an ongoing struggle to reform education at a local level, as human subjects are increasingly involved in creating and recreating identity in relation to cross-border understandings of cultural meanings, shifting languages, and uncertain bodies of knowledge. Schools construct subjects and often do so with the same profound unevenness that the world manufactures groups of people, depending on aspects such as class, gender, sexuality, race, and nationality; the results in school are expectedly similar to what we witness elsewhere around the world. We find openly oppressive situations, deeply unfair structures, and ultimately an inhuman existence for some, as opposed to a position of great power and possibility for a fortunate few. Schooling shapes us as individuals living in communities set in particular places at certain times, and it becomes painfully apparent that we need to challenge the basic assumptions inherent in systems of education, so that we might begin again to approach learning for purposes other than those demanded by a dominant market ideology.

Racial affiliations are shifting, unstable, uncertain, and not fixed, and the same can be said of other social affiliations. The multiplicity of our identities appear to often cut against one another at right angles, as Cameron McCarthy asserts, and this shifting ground demands that we assemble new structures to examine our identities, our schools, and our communities. This historical moment requires a radical reconfiguration of theoretical and methodological systems, to better understand and challenge the relations of power between the centers and the peripheries. The essays in this collection help us to re-examine the constantly transforming systems of government that regulate our conduct through various modes of media, claimed discourses of truth, and the constant appeal to self-government, self-discipline, and self-punishment. Obviously, the logic of these various institutions operates at the economic and political level, but we need to question how it regulates citizens through *cultural means*. The writers in this book help us theorize in terms of hybrid cultures, negotiating newly developing (never static) social disjunctures, and look for new narratives that might assist in understanding our places in the world; the classroom and the workplace are two sites where this tension plays out, but we cannot assume that these places are vacuums in space, nor are they temporally disconnected.

The collection of essays in this volume examines the three factors of class, gender, and ethnicity, suggesting methods that will enable these new students to move from oppression to equality. New forms of racism seem to be emerging in Spain, and the reader is urged to examine the question of difference in the 'Other', in a transnational context. Education can play a role in helping students to understand the fear and distrust that seems inherent in an encounter with difference, with newness; racism works as a perpetually nuanced ideology under constant reconstruction and redeployment in schools and in other social structures. As challenges of migration and the issue of xenophobia has increased in Spain with the arrival of more immigrants on the streets and in the schools, multiple unfixed identities require an anthropological undertaking, to develop a respect for difference, dialogue, and communication through multilingual approaches. The world is *not* a 'patchwork' of cultures, but seems more like a field of 'interrelations and mutations,' and anthropology can help us to till this constantly shifting field, this uneven ground moving beneath our feet.

What alternatives might we use to approach educational policy, to posit learning within a framework of cultural politics, to usher forth a local commitment on the part of education, coupled with a call for social justice in the schools? The theoretical intervention here focuses on systems of power through cultural means, and pursues social change as the goal of education, situated in a local context, with an acute awareness of transnational flows and disjunctures. It is necessary to assess the role of *informational capitalism* in a broad context, looking at how technologies generate and transmit

information over vast areas, reaching large numbers of people in a short time; how can we process this information, make sense of it, deconstruct it, and challenge it? The meaning of knowledge becomes a central question. Technological ideals seem to be propelling us forward with the promise of continued improvement across humanity, but we need to examine these modes of technology to understand how oppression is perpetuated around the world in different contexts. If we review the classroom culture, connecting it to other cultures, so that oppressed groups can understand the systems of oppression, to 'generate dreams,' we can collectively work to transform reality.

This collection of essays seeks to unearth hope and create coalitions through the development of 'knowledge, empathy, and understanding,' challenging the neoliberal discourses that have been re-articulated across the social spectrum to stifle voices of the oppressed, along lines of race, class, and gender. The notion of 'success' cannot be isolated around the individual alone as proffered (for the sake of profit) by the neoliberal discourse, as the ideology of individual success reproduces inequality and disintegrates social coalitions. To remake civic coexistence, we require cultural integration, both preserving our identity while incorporating diversity; global patterns of migration and settlement demand this integration process. 'Togetherness' assumes two forms: Being *with* and Being *for* others. To move from certainty to openness is no easy task, but is necessary to build solidarity and promote inclusion amidst the increasing complexity of culture. Power exerts itself in two ways, through force and through hegemony, and to counter this power, we need to learn how to combine and mediate our differences to create civic coexistence. Cultural representations are cultural politics, requiring cosmopolitanism, communication, and a commitment to inclusion.

These essays accentuate the necessity of understanding popular culture in terms of the power structures at work in society, as various modes of media reveal themselves as both symptoms and examples of dominant forms of representation. Popular culture is situated as a contradictory space, 'a site for strategic contestation,' and to create a critical consciousness, we need to understand the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and class (as well as other aspects of being). The discipline of cultural studies needs to look inward, as well as casting its gaze outward, turning the camera on itself, framing the discourse and assumptions of its own practices. An examination of the 'public' discourse of media controlled by the elite unveils the domination inherent in an *elite discourse* that maintains racism and social inequality. Educational institutions need to challenge the social practice of racism, as well as assisting students in a deconstruction of the discourse that undergirds race. Freedom comes to be seen as a creative act on the part of a community, changing the human condition from one of oppression to one of equality. *Transnational*

*Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education* is a collection that offers a critically optimistic approach to negotiating cultural studies with an eye on traditional schooling, as well as other sites of identity formation. Identity is fluid, variegated, and in flux; always, however, coexistence is possible and needs to be our goal. The essays in the book help to shake up the narratives that dominate our lives transnationally, and ask important questions that speak to lives at a local level in particular contexts.