Donna Giguere

Dr. Trevor Kinlock

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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Week Three Chapter Summary

In this week’s reading, the emphasis is on theories of social and cultural reproduction and then on answering to these issues of inequality in education. First, there are a few theories of social reproduction addressed through the views of Louis Althusser; Bowles and Gintis, and finally, of Pierre Bourdieu through the larger lens of cultural reproduction as well.

The author ultimately finds fault with the views, as each seems unable to provide the basis for radical theories of education; though, the author points out the limited merits as well. First, Althusser looks at education in terms of “autonomous institutions” dependent on the domination of the society. In his view, society stays stagnant. With Bowles and Gintis, society also stays stagnant, but they are looking at the need to keep those in their labor classes through the capitalist system.

Bourdieu (and also Jean-Claude Passeron) reject the notion of autonomous education and reflect these are only “indirectly” autonomous as they are influenced by the larger system of culture and politics. Thus, education becomes a vehicle for the ruling classes and whatever is of benefit to these powers. However, like Althusser, Bowles, and Gintis, Bourdieu leaves the oppressed in a helpless circumstance with little room for advancement out of grim circumstances. The work of Bernstein also echoes an acceptance of hopelessness for change.

Therefore, it is necessary to move beyond these theories to one that considers opposition to the system. Sexism is addressed as an additional hindrance to upward mobility. Further works fail to grasp fully the problems that gender brings and the compounding effect when juxtaposed to class and race. Ultimately, resistance is necessary and radical pedagogy needs to be refined and employed. Educators should give deeper analysis and organized effort to bring about meaningful change.