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Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education

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This article reviews the developing literature on anti-oppressive education (i.e., education that works against various forms of oppression) by summarizing and critiquing the four primary approaches that educational researchers have taken in conceptualizing (1) the nature of oppression and (2) the curricula, pedagogies, and policies needed to bring about change. These four approaches to anti-oppressive education are Education for the Other, Education About the Other, Education that Is Critical of Privileging and Othering, and Education that Changes Students and Society. Engaging in anti-oppressive education requires not only using an amalgam of these four approaches. In order to address the multiplicity and situatedness of oppression and the complexities of teaching and learning educators also constantly need to “look beyond” the field of educational research to explore the possibilities of theories that remain marginalized, including post-structuralist and psychoanalytic perspectives. This article concludes with implications for future research.

In an attempt to address the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression play out in schools, educators and educational researchers have engaged in two types of projects: understanding the dynamics of oppression and articulating ways to work against it. Whether working from feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, or other perspectives, they seem to agree that oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized. They disagree, however, on the specific cause or nature of oppression, and on the curricula, pedagogies, and educational policies needed to bring about change. Collectively, they point to what I see as four ways to conceptualize and work against oppression. In this article, I describe and critique each approach, noting how different approaches are helpful for achieving different goals. I argue that though educators have come a long way in detailing approaches that address different forms and different aspects of oppression, they need to make more use of poststructuralist perspectives in order to address the multiplicity and situatedness of oppression and the complexities of teaching and learning. Broadening the ways we conceptualize the dynamics of oppression, the processes of teaching and learning, and even the purposes of schooling is necessary when working against the many forms of social oppression that play out in the lives of students. Doing so requires not only using an amalgam of these four approaches (which many educators already do), but also “looking

beyond” the field to explore the possibilities of theories that remain marginalized in educational research.

Before turning to my analysis, I should explain some of my terminology. I use the term “Other” to refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, i.e., that are *other than* the norm, such as students of color, students from under- or unemployed families, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically “masculine,” and students who are, or are perceived to be, queer (I will define this term in a moment). Although my analysis focuses only on four forms of oppression, I believe it extends to other forms of oppression and to other traditionally marginalized groups, such as students with disabilities, students with limited or no English-language proficiency, and students from non-Christian religious backgrounds. Future research should further explore these connections.

I use the term “queer” to refer to persons who are “gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersexed—i.e., neither male nor female (Chase, 1998; Kessler, 1998)—or in other ways ‘queer’ because of [their] sexual identity or sexual orientation.” Although I mainly use “queer” to refer to sexual orientation, I do not limit its definition to “gay, lesbian, or bisexual,” partly because of the interconnectedness of sexuality and sex/gender (Butler, 1990) and partly because of the interconnectedness of heterosexism and gender oppression (Wilchins, 1997). The term “queer,” after all, like “fag” and “dyke,” derogates and polices not only people who feel attraction for members of the same gender, but also people who exhibit physical and behavioral traits that society deems appropriate only for those of a different gender (e.g., boys who act “like girls” and girls who look “like boys”). In addition to its inclusiveness, I choose to use the term “queer” for its pedagogical effect and political significance. As I will later argue, the term “queer” is discomfoting to many people because it continues to invoke a history of bigotry and hatred. For many queers, however, it has come to signify a rejection of normative sexualities and genders, a reclaiming of the terms of their identities, and a feeling of self-empowerment (Capper, 1999; Pinar, 1998; Tierney & Dilley, 1998). This disruptive, discomfoting term, with its multiple meanings and uses, seems appropriate for an essay on changing oppression.

Education For the Other

What is Oppression?

The first approach to addressing oppression focuses on improving the experiences of students who are Othered, or in some way oppressed, in and by mainstream society. Researchers taking this approach have conceptualized oppression in schools in two ways. First, schools are spaces where the Other is treated in harmful ways. Sometimes the harm results from *actions* by peers or even teachers and staff. For example, numerous researchers have documented the discrimination, harassment, physical and verbal violence, exclusion, and isolation experienced by female students (Kenway & Willis, 1998), by queer students or students perceived to be queer (P. Gibson, 1989), and by students of color, such as Asian American students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). Sometimes, however, the harm results from *inactions* by educators, administra-

tors, and politicians. For example, a number of researchers have documented the shocking, shameful, and substandard conditions, such as insufficient instructional resources and unsafe buildings and classrooms, of many urban schools serving economically poorer students and students of color (Kozol, 1991), while others have pointed to the lack of attention female students receive by teachers who simultaneously give too much of their attention to disruptive male students (Orenstein, 1994). The first way, then, that researchers have illustrated oppression is by pointing to the recognizably harmful ways in which only certain students are treated in and by schools, i.e., to the external ways in which Otherness is marginalized.

Oppression, however, is not always easy to recognize. The second way that researchers have conceptualized oppression is by looking at assumptions about and expectations for the Other—especially those held by educators—that influence how the Other is treated. In particular, they look at the internal ways of thinking, feeling, and valuing that justify, prompt, and get played out (and even reinforced) in the harmful treatment of the Other. Sometimes, these dispositions—both conscious and unconscious ones—are about whom the Other is and/or should be. For example, researchers have pointed to various racial and ethnic prejudices and stereotypes that influence how teachers treat their students of color (Miller, 1995), or the sexist ideologies and stereotypes that influence how teachers differently treat their female and male students and how students treat one another (Kenway & Willis, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Sometimes, however, these dispositions are about whom the Other is not but should become or about whom the privileged must be in order *not* to be the Other. For example, researchers have pointed to the assimilationist ideology that students of color should conform to the mainstream culture and become more like middle-class White Americans (Miller, 1995) or to the sexist and heterosexist assertion that all boys should exhibit hegemonic masculinity in order to be “real” men (Askew & Ross, 1988).

Students have responded in a variety of ways to these oppressive treatments and dispositions. Some have “overcompensated” by hyperperforming in academic, extracurricular, and social activities (Friend, 1993); some have accommodated enough to succeed academically but have maintained a sense of connection to their ethnic culture and community (M. Gibson, 1988); some have resisted the dominant values and norms of school and society (Fordham, 1996; Willis, 1977); some have experienced an array of “hidden injuries,” such as the psychological harm of internalizing or even resisting stereotypes (Osajima, 1993); and some have endured depression, turned violence onto themselves by abusing drugs, starving and scarring their bodies, even attempting or committing suicide (Orenstein, 1994; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Thus, to the onlooker, some of these students “succeed” in school, whereas others are marginalized, fail, and drop out, while still others exhibit no signs that distinguish them from the majority of the student body. But despite the apparent differences between those students who “succeed” and those who “fail” or simply fail to distinguish themselves, all experience oppression.

Bringing about Change

Researchers in this first approach to anti-oppressive education have suggested two ways in which to address oppression. First, responding to the notion that

schools are “harmful spaces,” many researchers have argued that schools need to be and to provide *helpful* spaces for all students, especially for those students who are targeted by the forms of oppression described above. These “spaces” have been conceptualized on two levels. On one level, the entire school needs to *be* a space that is *for* students that welcomes, educates, and addresses the needs of the Other. For example, the school needs to be a *safe* space, where the Other (such as queer or Asian American students) will not be harmed verbally, physically, institutionally, or culturally (Governor’s Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). The school needs to be an *affirming* space, where Otherness (such as racial difference or queer sexuality) is embraced, where “normalcy” (cultural or sexual) is not presumed, where students will have an audience for their Othered voice(s), and where the Other will have role models (Asante, 1991; Malinowitz, 1995). The school also needs to be a financially and materially sound space where buildings are safe, instructional materials are available, and programs and personnel are sufficiently funded.

On another level, the school needs to *provide* separate spaces where students who face different forms of oppression can go for help, support, advocacy, resources, and so forth. For example, the school needs to provide *therapeutic* spaces where harmed students can go to work through their trauma, such as that resulting from harassment or assault; to receive the affirmation provided by support groups; and to come to know and accept who they are by learning about their racial and sexual differences (Crystal, 1989; Reynolds & Koski, 1995). The school also needs to provide *supportive* spaces where the Other can receive advocacy, such as that provided by teachers willing to serve on committees that address sexual discrimination and harassment and to signify their advocacy by, for instance, putting pink triangles on their classroom doors (Kenway & Willis, 1998). Student alliances that engage in political action, such as gay-straight alliances (Woog, 1995) and Asian American student organizations (Lee, 1996) should also occupy such a space. Finally, the school needs *empowering* spaces, where the Other can find resources and tools to challenge oppression themselves, such as informational pamphlets by various organizations, and a wide variety of literature in libraries and resource rooms (see, e.g., the lists of queer resources in Besner & Spungin, 1995; Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues, 1997; Unks (Ed.), 1995). Many have even argued that schools should be, or at least provide, learning spaces exclusively for the Other, such as single-sex schools or classrooms (Salomone, 1997).

The second way researchers have suggested that oppression may be addressed responds to the harmful dispositions of the teachers, and involves teaching *to* all students. Researchers have argued that educators need not only to acknowledge the diversity among their students, but also to embrace these differences and to treat their students as raced, gendered, sexualized, and classed individuals. For example, researchers suggest that rather than assume that students of color are intellectually inferior to White American students or culturally deficient, educators should incorporate the students’ home cultures into their classrooms and pedagogies, teaching in a “culturally sensitive” or “culturally relevant” way (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Philips, 1983; Sheets, 1995; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993), or even teaching students about the “culture of power” so that

they will know what it takes to succeed in mainstream schools and society (Delpit, 1988). Rather than employ traditional and, as many have argued, masculinist pedagogies that tend to benefit boys and marginalize girls (as, for instance, does that practiced in teacher-centered lectures or competitive debates where teaching/learning is rational, abstract, and detached from personal experience), educators should teach in ways that are equitable (American Association of University Women, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), are traditionally “feminine”—such as by personally “connecting” and constructing knowledge *with* their students (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986)—or are sensitive to the differences between how boys and girls think and evaluate (Gilligan, 1982). Furthermore, educators should teach in a way that challenges the sexism—and its concomitant heterosexism (Epstein, 1997)—prevalent among boys (Connell, 1997) and young men (Sanday, 1990).

Concerning queer students: rather than assume that all students are heterosexual and sexually “innocent”—which is not to say asexual but rather fragilely heterosexual (Watney, 1991)—and for that matter, that students can, should, or do leave their sexuality outside of school, educators need to acknowledge and address the fact that students do bring sexuality into schools for a variety of reasons, such as to resist norms (Walkerdine, 1990) and to denigrate Others (Epstein & Johnson, 1998), and that students are not all heterosexual (some are queer, some are questioning). Finally, rather than assume that a student’s class background or community has no bearing on how he or she engages with schooling, educators should acknowledge the realities of day-to-day life that can hinder one’s ability to learn—as Johnson (1997) did when she addressed the death of a classmate in an inner-city school—and should draw from the student’s own knowledge, experiences, and outlooks (as Sylvester (1997) did when he transformed his classroom of predominantly working-class students of color into a “mini-society” in which students ran their own businesses).

In short, these studies suggest that educators should not ignore the differences in their students’ identities, nor should they assume that their students are “normal” (i.e., expect them to have the normative, privileged identities) or neutral, i.e., without race, sex, and so forth (which is often read as “normal” anyway). Rather, educators need to acknowledge and affirm differences and tailor their teaching to the specifics of their student population.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this approach is that it calls on educators to recognize that there is great diversity among the student population, and, more importantly, that the majority of students—namely, all those who are not White American, male, hegemonically masculine, heterosexual, and middle-class or wealthy—are marginalized and harmed by various forms of oppression in schools. Educators have a responsibility to make schools into places that are for, and that attempt to teach to, *all* their students. To fail to work against the various forms of oppression is to be complicit with them.

This approach alone, however, has its limitations. There are at least three. First, educators cannot focus only on the treatment of the Other, and ignore other ways in which oppression plays out in schools. In fact, by conceptualizing oppression in terms of the marginalization of the Other (and not in terms of the

privileging of the “normal”), and by focusing predominantly on the negative experiences of the Other in schools, this approach implies that the Other is the problem; it implies that, without the Other, schools would not be oppressive places. One weakness, then, of this first approach to anti-oppressive education is its emphasis on individual prejudice, cultural difference, the interpersonal, harmful treatment of the Other, and its failure to attend to other causes and manifestations of oppression. The dynamics of oppression are not confined to the ways in which certain students are treated by educators and other students; therefore, disrupting oppression requires more than preventing harmful interpersonal interactions.

Second, a form of education that is “for the Other” requires defining and addressing groups whose identities and boundaries are difficult to define because they are fluid, contested, and constantly shifting. Difficulties and questions arise in at least three situations. First, when developing safe spaces, supportive programs, and resources that work against homophobia, one might ask, who is the Other that these spaces, etc. are for? Are they only for students who identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, and perhaps are questioning their identities as well? What about students harassed because they are perceived to be gay/lesbian/bisexual based on their gender expression, or children of gay/lesbian/bisexual parents? They are all harmed by homophobia, and they all deserve support, but one could argue that they need different kinds of support. Second, when implementing feminist pedagogies that strive to teach in feminine ways or to empower girls to enter non-traditional fields, one might ask, is the goal of these pedagogies to challenge gender oppression? If so, who is the Other that these pedagogies are targeting? Only girls, and perhaps non-hegemonically masculine boys as well? What about other people oppressed on the basis of their gender, such as transgender and intersexed people? Without ignoring the need to address the history of patriarchy and sexism against women and girls, educators must also break down gender categories in order to work against the oppression of people who do not fit the normative categories of “boy” and “girl” (Bornstein, 1994; Chase, 1998). Third, even when the Other is named, spaces, resources, and pedagogies often succeed in reaching only a portion of the targeted population and fail to address students who are marginalized on the basis of more than one identity. Students who are both queer and of color do not always feel “safe” entering multicultural student centers. Culturally relevant pedagogies that challenge racism often operate within a heterosexist discourse that silences people of color with queer sexualities.

Thus, the situated nature of oppression (whereby oppression plays out differently for different people in different contexts) and the multiple and intersecting identities of students make difficult any anti-oppressive effort that revolves around only one identity and only one form of oppression. Perhaps what is needed, then, are efforts that explicitly attempt to address multiplicity and keep goals and boundaries fluid and situated. In other words, what is produced or practiced as a safe space, a supportive program, a feminist pedagogy, or a culturally relevant pedagogy cannot be a strategy that claims to be the solution for all people at all times, but rather, is a product or practice that is constantly being contested and redefined. Rather than search for a *strategy that works*, I urge the participation in efforts that address the articulated and known needs and indi-

viduality of the students, but that constantly *look to the margins* to find students who are being missed and needs that have yet to be articulated. Educators should create safe spaces based on what they see is needed right now, but they should also constantly re-create the spaces by asking, whom does this space harm or exclude? They should create supportive programs, but should also constantly re-create the programs by asking, what practices does this program foreclose and make unthinkable? They should engage in equitable and relevant pedagogies, but should also constantly rethink their pedagogies by asking, whom does this pedagogy miss or silence? Without constantly complicating the very terms of “the Other,” an education “for the Other” will not be able to address the ways it always and already misses some Others.

A third weakness of this approach is its assumption that educators can accurately assess the needs of their students, especially their Othered students. As I will later argue, teaching involves a great degree of unknowability. Ellsworth (1997), for example, points out that there is always a “space between” the teacher/teaching and learner/learning, between, for instance, who the teachers thinks the students are and who they actually are, or between what the teacher teaches and what the students learn. What does it mean, then, to give students what they need if we acknowledge that we cannot know (1) what they need and (2) whether our efforts are received by students in the ways that we want them to be received? This is not to say that educators should not try to teach, but that the very notion of what it means “to teach” needs to change. I will discuss this factor of unknowability when I turn to the fourth approach to working against oppression. I will, at that time, link the notion of “working through trauma” with another psychoanalytic notion, that of “learning through crisis.” For now, my point is that the first approach is necessary to work against the harmful effects of oppression, but in helping only the Other (and in presuming to know the Other), it alone is not enough.

Education About the Other

What is Oppression?

Educators cannot focus exclusively on the treatment of the Other and ignore other ways in which oppression plays out in schools. Turning from the school environment to the school curriculum, some researches have attempted to work against oppression by focusing on what all students—privileged and marginalized—know and should know about the Other.

Researchers have pointed to two kinds of knowledge (or, perhaps more accurately, two ways of thinking) that can lead to the harm of the Other by others (through, for instance, the interpersonal interactions and educator inaction described earlier) and by him- or herself (such as when an individual internalizes negative messages). The first kind of knowledge is the knowledge about (only) what society defines as “normal” (the way things generally are) and what is normative (the way things ought to be). In this case, Otherness is known only by inference, and often in contrast to the norm and is therefore only partial. Such partial knowledge often leads to misconceptions, such as the notions that “authentic” Americans are the White New England settlers and their descendants, meaning people of color are not real Americans (see Giroux (1997) for a discus-

sion of Whiteness and racial “coding”); or that normal and moral human beings fall in love with, marry, and procreate with members of the opposite sex, meaning same-sex attraction reflects an illness, a sin, and/or a crime (Sears, 1987); or that there are two genders/sexes and that members of each gender exhibit only certain behaviors, appearances, feelings, occupations, etc., meaning anyone who deviates has an unnatural or inappropriate gender (Chase, 1998; Connell, 1987). Schools often contribute to this partial knowledge through the selection of topics for the curriculum, such as the celebration of industrial inventors and the relative absence of any discussion of labor exploitation in U.S. history textbooks (Anyon, 1979).

The second kind of knowledge is about the Other but encourages a distorted and misleading understanding of the Other that is based on stereotypes and myths. In other words, the second kind of knowledge is partial, i.e., biased. Students learn or acquire this second form of knowledge both outside and inside of school. Outside of school, for example, students are learning about queers from sensationalist and stereotypical accounts in the media and popular culture (Lipkin, 1995); they are learning about Asian American men and women from exoticized portrayals in films and television (Okiihiro, 1994); and they are learning about the “proper” roles for girls or women and boys or men from their family, their communities, the popular press, and so forth (Willis, 1977; McRobbie, 1978). But even inside school, students learn little that challenges these stereotypes and misrepresentations. For example, students learn little if anything about the gay liberation movement in history textbooks (Lipkin, 1995); they see few portrayals of queers in health textbooks, and many of these only in the context of sexually-transmitted disease (Whatley, 1992); they hear and/or engage in few discussions about queers, except when making jokes or disparaging comments, and since these often go unchallenged by the teacher, they consequently learn that it is acceptable to denigrate queers (Unks, 1995); boys in particular learn that normalcy does not include queer sexualities (Epstein, 1997; Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

In short, researchers have suggested that the “knowledge” many students have about the Other is either incomplete because of exclusion, invisibility, and silence, or distorted because of disparagement, denigration, and marginalization. What makes these partial knowledges so problematic is that they are often taught through the informal or “hidden” curriculum (Jackson, 1968), which means that, because they are taught indirectly, pervasively, and often unintentionally, they carry more educational significance than the official curriculum (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993).

Bringing about Change

Researchers who adopt this second approach, Education about the Other, have argued that schools and teachers need to work against these two harmful forms of knowledge that are reinforced in school. They have suggested two ways to teach about the Other. One, the curriculum needs to *include specific units* on the Other, such as curricular units on labor history and resistance (Apple, 1995); feminist scholarship, or any of a number of fields in women’s studies (Schmitz, Rosenfelt, Butler, & Guy-Sheftall, 1995); literature by and/or about queers (Sumara, 1993) or the representation of queers in films (Russo, 1989);

and various topics in Asian American studies (Hune, 1995) and ethnic studies (Chan, 1995).

The second strategy for teaching about the Other is to *integrate Otherness throughout the curriculum*. Educators should not limit their lessons about the Other to once or twice a year when this topic is exclusively addressed but integrate lessons and topics about the Other throughout the curriculum. For example, educators can teach about gay resistance movements when talking about the civil rights movements of the 1960s, when talking about the impact of changing the boundaries of voting districts in local elections (which helped activist Harvey Milk get elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the 1980s), when talking about grassroots mobilization around the AIDS epidemic and the AIDS Memorial Quilt, and so forth. More routine opportunities to integrate diversity include: the wording of math problems; lists that suggest possible topics to cover for science research projects; discussions of the personal lives of historical figures, authors, political leaders, and celebrities; and the use of guest speakers (Loutzenheiser, 1997).

By integrating lessons on the Other throughout the curriculum educators can move away from merely adding on a lesson here and there. Such integration can work against the notion that teaching and learning about the Other can be achieved with a day's lesson, say, on Native Americans, and then another on the physically disabled. In addition, the movement away from discrete lessons about the Other can work against the tendency to treat different groups as mutually exclusive. Such an approach enables educators to address the intersections of these different identities and their attendant forms of oppression, examining, for instance, queer themes in ethnic literature (Athanases, 1996); queer sexualities in communities of color (Sears, 1995; Wilson, 1996) or critiques of feminist movements and feminist spaces by women from working-class backgrounds, women of color, women with queer sexualities, and so forth (Anzaldúa, 1987; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Schmitz et al, 1995).

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this approach is that it calls on educators to bring visibility to enrich their students' understandings of different ways of being. In fact, by trying to treat other ways of being as something that is as normal as the normative ways of being, this approach attempts to normalize differences and Otherness. Working against incomplete and biased forms of knowledge that students have about the Other, and working against the harm that often results from partial knowledges, this approach aims not merely to increase the students' knowledge but to develop the students' empathy for the Other (Britzman, 1998a). If individuals know more, they will not oppress the Other and one another. Thus, rather than targeting only the Other (which is the case with the first approach), this approach reaches to all students.

Like the first approach, however, this second approach does not bring about change unproblematically. There are at least three reasons for this. First, teaching about the Other could present a dominant narrative of the Other's experience that might be read by students as, for instance, "*the* queer experience," or "*the* Latino/a experience." Otherness becomes essentialized and remains different from the norm. Second, teaching about the Other often positions the Other

as the expert, as is the case when students of color are asked to explain the African American (or some “minority”) perspective (hooks, 1994). Such a situation reinforces the social, cultural, and even intellectual space/division between the norm and the Other. Third, the goals of teaching about the Other and working against partial knowledge are based on the modernist goal of having full knowledge, of seeing truth, of finding utopia. Some have argued, however, that partial (i.e., “situated”) knowledge is the only form of knowledge that is possible and desirable (Haraway, 1988). Furthermore, practically speaking, there is only so much time in the school year, and it is literally impossible to teach adequately about every culture and every identity, especially given the multiplicity of experiences within any cultural community (e.g., a straight Jewish woman’s experiences often differ significantly from a straight Jewish man’s experiences).

All of this is not to say that teaching about the Other and amplifying voices of the Other should be avoided. Rather, the *uses* of such lessons should be reconsidered. Learning about and hearing the Other should be done not to fill a gap in knowledge (as if ignorance about the Other were the only problem), but to disrupt the knowledge that is already there (since the harmful/partial knowledges that an individual already has are what need to change) (Luhmann, 1998). As I will later argue, changing oppression requires disruptive knowledge, not simply more knowledge. Students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all. According to Ellsworth (1997), teachers need to get students to always ask, what has *not* been said (by the student, by the teacher, by the text, by society)? Lessons about the Other need to include learning to resist one’s desire to know, to essentialize, to close off further learnings. The goal is not final knowledge (and satisfaction), but disruption, dissatisfaction, and the desire for more change.

To put it another way, lessons about the Other should not aim to tell students the *truth* about the Other. Rather, lessons about the Other should be treated as both catalysts and resources for students to *use* as they learn more. Disruptive knowledge, in other words, is not an end in itself, but a means toward the always-shifting end/goal of learning more. For example, novels from writers of color have traditionally been used to teach students about different cultures, or to give students entry into different cultural experiences (O’Neill, 1993). The problem with such a use of novels comes when students believe that, after “understanding” the novel, they will “understand” the represented culture or group. Yet every novel has silences and every novel privileges certain ideologies over others; every novel, in other words, provides only a partial perspective. Therefore, using novels to learn the truth about Others is problematic. However, rather than ask, “what does this novel tell us about, say, Native Hawaiians,” what if teachers were to ask, “how can this novel be used to learn more about Native Hawaiians, or about racism against Native Hawaiians, or about Native Hawaiians in the mainstream-U.S. imagination?” Rather than ask, “what do we know, based on this book, about Native Hawaiian cultures and people,” what if teachers asked, “which stereotypes of Native Hawaiians does this novel reinforce, and which ones does it challenge?” Rather than ask, “according to

this book, what is it like to be Native Hawaiian,” what if teachers asked, “what is not said in this book about being Native Hawaiian, and how do those silences make possible and impossible different ways of thinking about Native Hawaiian peoples and experiences?” The value of lessons about the Other comes not in the truth it gives us about the Other, but in the pedagogical and political uses to which the resulting (disruptive) knowledge can be put.

I should note that even when this is done the second approach to anti-oppressive education nonetheless has limitations. One, the assumption that information and knowledge lead to empathy does not account for times when feelings do not reflect intention, and, for that matter, when neither feelings nor intention gets played out in behavior. Two, even if empathy were achieved, it could be argued that it simply reinforces the binary of “us” and “them.” As Britzman (1998a) has argued, the expectation that information about the Other leads to empathy is often based on the assumption that learning about “them” helps a student see that “they” are like “us”; in other words, learning about the Other helps the student see the self in the Other. Such a perspective leaves the self-Other binary intact, and allows the self (i.e., the normative identities) to remain privileged. Three, consequently, teaching about the Other does not force the privileged students to separate the normal from the self, i.e., to acknowledge and work against their own privileges. Teaching about the Other does not necessarily illuminate, critique, or transform the processes by which the Other is differentiated from and subordinated to the norm.

My point is not to argue that empathy has no social value. On the contrary, I believe that students need to have empathy for others (especially Others), and pedagogies that aim to cultivate such a sensitivity are important components of anti-oppressive education. However, the problem lies with privileging empathy as the final goal of anti-oppressive education. As I argued earlier, the root of oppression does not reside solely in how individuals think about, feel towards, and treat one another, and thus, empathy cannot be the panacea. It is necessary, but not sufficient.

In sum, this second approach to challenging oppression, like the first, works against the marginalization, denigration, and harm of the Other. However, while such efforts do help the Other, they do not bring about structural and systemic change, they do not change the norm, and thus, they do not disrupt the process that differentiates the Other from the Normal. In addition to the approaches that address Otherness, approaches are needed that address normalcy—approaches that work against the *privileging* of certain groups, the normalizing of certain identities, and that make visible these processes. The next two approaches do just that.

Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering

What is Oppression?

Many researchers have argued that understanding oppression requires looking at more than one’s dispositions toward, treatment of, and knowledge about the Other. Educators and students need to examine not only how some groups and identities are Othered, that is, marginalized, denigrated, violated in society, but also how some groups are favored, normalized, privileged, as well as how

this dual process is legitimized and maintained by social structures and competing ideologies. Schools, after all, are part of society, and understanding oppression in schools requires examining the relationship between schools and other social institutions and cultural ideas (Stambach, 1999). For example, understanding the marginalization of female students (and faculty) requires looking not only at sexist interactions and cultures, but also patriarchal structures (such as a male-dominated administration with a female-dominated workforce) and phallogocentric (i.e., male- or masculine-centered) ideologies (Luke & Gore, 1992). Similarly, understanding social and economic reproduction, and oppression on the basis of class, requires looking at structural factors, in particular, at the imperatives and contradictions of capitalism, to see how such things as the commodification of culture, the paradoxical nature of working-class resistance, and the technical control of teachers all contribute to the legitimization and maintenance of the existing socio-economic order (Apple, 1995). Understanding the underachievement of Hmong American women in higher education requires looking not only at cultural differences, but at “economic, racial, and other structural barriers to educational persistence and success” (Lee, 1997). And understanding the oppression of queer students requires moving beyond “homophobia” and its “humanist psychological discourse of individual fear of homosexuality as contagion,” to consider heteronormativity and “how the production of deviancy is intimately tied to the very possibility of normalcy” (Britzman, 1998a, p. 152).

Researchers have also noted that schools do not stand outside of these structures and ideologies, innocent of the dynamics of oppression, but are institutions or “apparatuses” that transmit “ruling ideologies” (Althusser, 1971), maintain “hegemony” (Gramsci, 1971) and reproduce existing social order. Researchers have argued that schools (and other social institutions) serve two functions: they privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalizing others, and they legitimize this order by couching it in the language of “normalcy” and “commonsense.” Thus, the role of the school in working against oppression must involve not only a critique of structural and ideological forces, but also a movement against its own complicity with oppression.

Bringing about Change

The third approach to working against oppression advocates a *critique* and *transformation* of hegemonic structures and ideologies. This process begins with more knowledge, especially knowledge about oppression. As Ladson-Billings (1995) argues, students need to be able to “recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). What is significant here is that, unlike the first two approaches to challenging oppression, this approach does not argue that working against harmful forms of partial knowledge entails only learning more about the Other. It also requires learning that that which society defines as “normal” is a social (and contested) construct (Apple, 1995) that both regulates who we are supposed to be and denigrates whoever fails to conform to “proper” gender roles, for instance, or “normal” sexual orientation (Greene, 1996). Thus, educators should teach not just about the Other, but also about the processes by which some are Othered while others are normalized.

Furthermore, the path to developing a critical consciousness involves not only learning about the processes of privileging/normalizing and marginalizing/

Othering, but also *unlearning* (Britzman, 1998a) what one had previously learned is “normal” and normative. The thinking, here, is that privilege is often couched in other discourses. For example, as I noted earlier, the privilege of Whiteness is often disguised as “authenticity”; and heterosexuality is often privileged as normalcy or morality. Thinking critically, then, involves recognizing this couching and masking of privilege, and teaching critically involves unmasking or making visible the privilege of certain identities and the invisibility of this privilege (Giroux, 1997).

I should note that the process of learning about the dynamics of oppression also involves learning about oneself. Students need to learn two things about themselves. One, that some of their identities and experiences may be those they are studying about, and thus, that they may be privileged in some ways. Two, that they (often unknowingly) are complicit with and even contribute to these forms of oppression when they participate in the privileging of certain identities. Thus, teachers should engage in a “pedagogy of positionality” that engages both students and teacher in recognizing and critiquing how one is positioned and how one positions others in social structures (Maher & Tetreault, 1994).

Thus far, I have argued that teaching students to be critical of oppression entails helping them recognize both the privilege of certain identities, including their own, and the processes of normalizing and Othering, in which they are complicit. This third approach to bringing about change, however, does not have as its sole goal knowledge about oppression. As I argued earlier, “critical” education involves both the critique *and transformation* of structural oppression (Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Knowledge is but the first step of a larger process. Also necessary are thinking skills that students can use to formulate effective plans of action. Ellsworth (1992) describes the assumptions underlying critical pedagogy as “the teaching of analytic and critical skills for judging the truth and merit of propositions, and the interrogation and selective appropriation of potentially transformative moments in the dominant culture” (p. 96). Thus, when students have both knowledge about oppression and critical thinking skills they will be “empowered” to challenge oppression.

As Freire (1995)—whose work on “liberatory education” has become the foundation of “critical pedagogy”—and feminist researchers influenced by him (hooks, 1994; Weiler, 1991) have argued, critical education or “consciousness-raising” (what Freire calls *conscientizacao*) entails learning “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, *and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality*” (Freire, 1995, p. 17, my emphasis). Similarly, Maher and Tetreault (1994) have argued that, “if the classroom setting can help students to understand the workings of positional dynamics in their lives, . . . then they can begin to challenge them and to create change” (p. 203). Thus, critical knowledge and thinking is what impels students toward action and change, toward resisting and challenging oppression. This emphasis on knowledge and resistance is characteristic not only of many critical and feminist pedagogies (such as those listed above), but also of queer (Malinowitz, 1995) and multicultural pedagogies (such as that suggested by McLaren (1994), who advocates a “critical and resistance multiculturalism,” and by Sleeter & Grant (1987), who advocate a “social reconstructionist” multiculturalism).

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this particular approach is that it calls on educators not only to teach about oppression but to try to change society as well. It is important for students to develop the knowledge and thinking skills necessary to understand not only the processes of Othering and normalizing, but also their own complicity in these processes. Further, this understanding should lead not only to empathy for the Other, but also to the ability and the will to resist hegemonic ideologies and to change social structures.

There are, however, several difficulties with this approach. First, the notion that oppression is structural in nature implies that oppression has the same general effect on people. My critique does not deny that members of any particular group share common experiences with oppression, or that certain groups have historically been subject to the same general form of oppression. However, because all individuals have multiple identities, not all members of the same group necessarily have the same or even similar experiences with oppression. Structural explanations cannot account for this diversity and particularity. Experiences with oppression involve many contradictions (Apple, 1995). For example, in her research on nursery classrooms, Walkerdine (1990) argues that females who at one moment were able to exert power over males, at another were rendered powerless by them, because in each situation *a different discourse was being recreated or "cited."* Specifically, several female students were able to control the toys and limit the activity of the boys while playing "house" by citing (i.e., calling up and working within) the discourse of domestic labor (woman-as-housekeeper). The female teacher exerted little control over a few of her male students during a particularly sexist and demeaning conversation because the boys cited the discourse of women-as-sex-object. This same teacher in turn excused their behavior by invoking the discourse of normal childhood sexuality. Such fluidity of identity and power relations cannot be explained by patriarchal structures that position males over females (and teachers over students). A framework that allows for a more situated understanding of oppression is needed.

Second, the goals of "consciousness-raising" and "empowerment" assume that knowledge, understanding, and critique lead to personal action and social transformation. There are two problems with this assumption. One, awareness does not necessarily lead to action and transformation. A student may learn all the knowledge and skills needed (theoretically) to engage in subversive political action, but may not choose to act any differently than before. Consider Britzman's (1998a) argument that all learning involves an unlearning. If the unlearning involved in learning the necessary knowledge and skills leads the student into a state of "crisis" or paralysis (such as feeling emotionally upset), the student will first need to work through the crisis before being able to act (Kumashiro, 1999a). I will explain the notion of crisis in more detail in the next section, but my point here is that rather than lead to a desire for change, crisis can sometimes lead to more entrenched resistance. Two, as I argued earlier, the teacher can never really know (1) whether the student learned what he or she was trying to teach, and (2) how the student will be moved by what was learned. The goal that students will first learn and then act "critically" is difficult to achieve when there is much that the teacher cannot and does not know and control.

The recognition that they can neither know what students learn nor control how students act based on what they learn, leads many teachers to feel paralyzed. In fact, many teachers do not want to enter these unknowable places and do whatever they can to maintain a sense of control over what and how students learn (Lather, 1998), even over how they behave. After all, educators are trained to delineate what they want students to understand, plan a lesson to get them there, and then assess whether they indeed came to this understanding. Although the alternative may seem disconcerting, according to Ellsworth (1997), it is promising for anti-oppressive education. Recognizing that this commonsense notion of teaching is impossible allows educators to rethink what it means to teach. Rather than try to get students to think and act in a particular way, Ellsworth urges educators to help transform the way teachers and students think, to always look beyond what the teacher is teaching and what the student is learning. Such an unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unforeseen goal is not unlike what I described in the previous approach as a way to work against the essentialization that so frequently occurs when teaching and learning about the Other—both involve *looking beyond*. Critical pedagogy needs to move away from saying that students need this/my critical perspective since such an approach merely replaces one (socially hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic) one. Rather than aim for *understanding* of some critical perspective, anti-oppressive pedagogy should aim for *effect* by having students engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or for what it forecloses, what it says and makes possible as well as what it leaves unsaid and unthinkable.

One of these unspoken assumptions of critical pedagogy points to the third difficulty with this third approach to anti-oppressive education: its goal of consciousness-raising puts into play a modernist and rationalist approach to challenging oppression that is actually harmful to students who are traditionally marginalized in society. As Ellsworth (1992) argues, the “key assumptions, goals and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy ... are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination” (p. 91). In particular, the rationalist approach to consciousness-raising assumes that reason and reason alone is what leads to understanding. However, rational detachment is impossible: one’s identities, experiences, privileges, investments, and so forth always influence how one thinks and perceives, what one knows and wills not to know. To accept the possibility of such detachment is really to perpetuate a “mythical norm” that assumes a White, heterosexual, male perspective. Those who are traditionally marginalized remain outsiders, called upon as “experts” to speak with their own voices and educate the norm, and then finally deemed not-rational because they speak from a visible (i.e., a non-dominant) standpoint. Furthermore, the life experiences of traditionally marginalized students, such as those of students of color with racism, can bring a historical and personal connection to the lessons on oppression that those who fit the mythical norm typically do not have. Personal experiences as people not privileged on the basis of race can exceed the expectations of a pedagogy that relies on rationality and that represses other ways of knowing and relating. Such lessons serve to Other students who cannot be engaged by a pedagogy that presumes to address the mythical norm.

Thus, critical pedagogy has worthwhile goals and helpful insights; if used uncritically, however, it can also be harmful.

Education that Changes Students and Society

What is Oppression?

Some researchers have turned to poststructuralism to help formulate conceptualizations of oppression that center around notions of discourse and citation (Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jimenez-Munoz, & Lamash, 1993; Butler, 1997; Davies, 1989; Kumashiro, 1999a, 1999b; McKay & Wong, 1996; Walkerdine, 1990). Earlier, I mentioned Walkerdine's (1990) study on nursery classrooms. Her analysis suggests that oppression and harm originate in (or are produced by) not merely the actions and intentions of individuals or in the imperatives of social structures and ideologies. Rather, oppression originates in discourse, and, in particular, in the citing of particular discourses, which frame how people think, feel, act, and interact. In other words, oppression is the citing of harmful discourses and the repetition of harmful histories.

To understand this notion of citation, consider the "model minority" stereotype of Asian American students, that they are all smart and hardworking "academic superstars" (Lee, 1996). As I discussed above, researchers have explained the harmfulness of stereotypes by turning to individual prejudice and discrimination (Miller, 1995) and to a White-dominated racial order that claims to be meritocratic and non-racist by pointing to the "success" of "model" minorities (Osajima, 1988). They have argued that the power of a stereotype to harm either exists inherently in the stereotype (so that an individual using a stereotype is like an individual wielding a weapon) or derives from social structures and ideologies (so that using a stereotype is like assisting in the maintenance of the structures/ideologies). They have also argued that this stereotype has tangible consequences, that it may cause differential treatment of students by teachers and even psychological harm (Crystal, 1989; Lee, 1996; Osajima, 1993). These theories imply that in order to challenge oppression educators should prohibit the use of the stereotype—as well as the voicing of hateful, harmful speech (Butler, 1997)—or strategize ways to "resist," "challenge," or dismantle an already-existing structure (through critical pedagogy).

Post-structuralism offers a different view. As I have argued elsewhere (Kumashiro, 1999b), iterating a stereotype can cause harm because every such iteration cites past iterations of that stereotype. In other words, the power of a stereotype to harm derives from a particular history of how that stereotype has been used and a particular community of people who have used that stereotype and who constitute that history (Butler, 1997). If someone was to tell me that I should be a better student because I am Asian American, I would likely conclude that the speaker is making racist assumptions about me because I have heard other people talk about and generalize about Asian Americans in similar ways before. The speaker's words would have racist meaning to me because I would read them as constituting part of the history of how the model-minority stereotype has been and is being used. Furthermore, if I believed that the speaker was judging me based on this stereotype and I valued the speaker's judgment, the speaker's words would likely produce in me feelings of failure or abnormal-

ity. I should note that the model-minority stereotype plays out not only in individual thoughts and interpersonal interactions, but also in institutional practices. Affirmative action offices and policies, or advisory commissions on race, for example, that fail to address the racism experienced by Asian Americans or otherwise ignore Asian Americans, are doing so because they are buying into the model-minority stereotype. In these institutions and ideologies the association between “Asianness” and “success” (or, the process in which Asianness cites success) gets repeated over and over.

As one might imagine, there are many other associations that characterize oppression: Whiteness and authenticity, femaleness and weakness, heterosexuality and normalcy, queer sexualities and sinfulness, limited-English-language proficiency and lack of intelligence, to name just a few. What is harmful is when people have to live through the repetitions of these histories, as everyone must through interpersonal conversations and interactions, and through institutional and economic and legal imperatives, and through moral and religious doctrines. Indeed, oppression itself can be seen as the repetition, throughout many levels of society, of harmful citational practices.

The notion of citationality provides insight not only into the cause of harm, but also into the relationship between different forms of oppression. In particular, conceptualizing oppression as *discursively* produced is helpful for understanding how oppression can play out differently in different contexts. Research on queer Asian American males, for example, reveals that the forms of oppression they experience in traditionally marginalized communities are both similar to and different from those in mainstream society (Kumashiro, 1999b). In Asian American communities, queer Asian American males often experience a form of heterosexism that cites the heterosexism in mainstream society but differs slightly from it insofar as it racializes it. In particular, Asian America, like mainstream society, defines queer sexuality as abnormal and sinful, but unlike mainstream society, often assigns it a racial marker: heterosexuality is marked as an Asian virtue, queerness as a “white disease.” Similarly, in queer communities, queer Asian American males often experience a form of racism that cites the racism of mainstream society (namely, Orientalism, in which racism is gendered and a deviant femininity attributed to Asian American men). However, rather than define the feminized Asian American male as sexually undesirable, many queers consider him “exotic” and, thus, sexually hyperdesirable. The racialized heterosexism in Asian American communities and the queered racism in queer communities point to two things: 1) the ways in which different forms of oppression often *supplement* one another, i.e., cite one another but add something new (Crowley, 1989), and perhaps more important, 2) the ways in which oppression is multiple, interconnected, and situated.

Bringing about Change

I have argued throughout this article that the situatedness and complexity of oppression make problematic any attempts to articulate a *strategy that works* (for all teachers, with all students, in all situations). Yet, as my critiques of the first three approaches suggest, poststructuralism (and other marginalized approaches) can be helpful to educators trying to engage in anti-oppressive education. Educational research has yet to offer many concrete examples of educators making use of these insights in their classrooms. In what follows, I point to

some of these insights, not only to help educators rethink their current practices, but also to suggest where future research might explore.

Perhaps the most important contribution poststructuralism has to make is its insistence that the very ways in which we think are framed not only by what is said, but also by what is not said (Marshall, 1992). Critical theorists made this explicit in their analysis of school curriculum (e.g., Anyon, 1979) and the “hidden” curriculum (Jackson, 1968). But what about the field of educational theory itself? Are “education,” “teaching,” and “learning” framed by theories, disciplines, and perspectives that make only certain ways of thinking possible, only certain kinds of questions askable? Ellsworth (1997) argues that educators trying to address oppression have conducted research primarily within the social sciences and have theorized primarily within “critical” frameworks. Drawing on the humanities (film studies, in particular) and such marginalized theoretical frameworks as poststructuralism and feminist psychoanalysis, she offers radically different ways of thinking about anti-oppressive education. Echoing her poststructuralist call to look outside the field to frameworks that remain marginalized in educational research, the remainder of this article examines insights that, I believe, have much to contribute to anti-oppressive educational research and practices.

First, the poststructuralist notions of citation and supplementation suggest different ways to think about what it means to bring about change. In contrast to *prohibiting* harmful words and actions, or to developing a *critical awareness* of harmful structures and ideologies, some have argued that change requires becoming involved in altering citational practices (Butler, 1997; Kumashiro, 1999a). They suggest that the prohibition and/or the critical awareness of the *repetition* of harmful associations/histories do not actually change them. What does is a particular kind of *labor*. When activists labor to *supplement* harmful associations they are participating in altering them (i.e., are constituting a reworked history, are performatively reworking history). When enough members of a community participate in this kind of labor citational practices (especially the repetition of harmful citations) change.

One example of this kind of change is the ongoing work among queers to disrupt the harmfulness of the term “queer.” People often associate certain identities with certain attributes because over time those associations have been repeated and thus naturalized. In the case of sexuality, for instance, heterosexuality is defined as “normal,” whereas queer sexualities are treated as a form of illness. However, when many members of a community begin to supplement the meanings of identities or structures in the same way, the associations change (e.g., it is less common for queers to be treated as sinners or criminals). Many queers have supplemented the term “queer” in such a way that, though it still cites a deviation from the norm, when used with other queers, rather than carrying a hateful sentiment it often carries a feeling of self-empowerment. More than merely psychological, this change has contributed to the increasing institutionalization of queer studies in higher education.

The importance of *laboring* to stop repetition and rework history/discourse can also be seen when this type of effort is attempted in the classroom. For example, in one of my teaching experiences, my students wrote and presented to other students a skit about the harmfulness of stereotypes. In their performance, they voiced a range of stereotypes, and although their point was to show

how stereotyping (as they were doing in the skit) is harmful, not all members of the audience heard the stereotypes being used in this critical way. One in particular said that he found the stereotypes of his own group offensive. I argue elsewhere (see Kumashiro, 1999a) that the reason the audience member was harmed by the skit was because he heard the students using the stereotypes as they have traditionally been used, in other words, as a repetition of the same harmful meanings and effects they have historically perpetuated. However, for my students the stereotypes had a different meaning because they cited not only the harmful meanings these stereotypes traditionally carry, but also the history of their own labor over the previous two weeks to disrupt, critique, and rework these stereotypes. Had they included in their skit this process of laboring to change the power of the stereotypes to harm, perhaps the audience member would have heard the stereotypes in the skit as a disruption, reworking, and supplementation (rather than a repetition) of the same harmful histories. While not a panacea for eliminating oppression, such an activity is one way to put the notions of citation, supplementation, and repetition to use in the classroom.

The recognition of *the harmfulness of repetition* and the imperative to *repeat with a difference* are also aspects of a second body of theories that remains marginalized in the field of educational research but that gives many helpful insights to anti-oppressive education. This body of theories is what I call contemporary feminist and queer readings of psychoanalysis (e.g., Britzman, 1998a, 1998b; Ellsworth, 1997; Felman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998; Pitt, 1998). Drawing on such thinkers as Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and Jacques Lacan, these theorists put to use aspects of psychoanalysis that help educators rethink the processes of teaching, learning, and change. They point to at least four insights.

First, coupled with the poststructuralist notions of repetition and supplementation, is the notion that a formidable barrier to anti-oppressive education is the unconscious desire for repetition and the psychic resistance to change. As I noted earlier, the “problem” that anti-oppressive education needs to address is not merely a lack of knowledge, but a resistance to knowledge (Luhmann, 1998), and in particular, a resistance to any knowledge that disrupts what one already “knows.” Britzman (1998a), for example, suggests that we unconsciously desire learning only that which affirms what we already know and our own sense of self. In fact, it could also be argued that we unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people and that we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. For example, many people desire a repetition of the silence that normally surrounds the term “queer,” preferring instead the less confrontational terms “gay” and “lesbian,” which do not contest the very meaning of “normal” (Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

Anti-oppressive education, then, needs to involve overcoming this resistance to change and learning, instead, to desire change, to desire difference. Earlier, I suggested that anti-oppressive education must involve learning to be unsatisfied with what is being learned, said, and known. What this entails, I believe, is the *ongoing labor* to stop the repetition of harmful “knowledges” (both partial knowledges like stereotypes, and presumably whole knowledges like neo-Marxist grand narratives), and to construct disruptive, different knowledges. In other words, to participate in the ongoing, never-completed construction of knowl-

edge, students must always look beyond what is known; they must ask, “what is not said?” and then go to places that have, until now, been foreclosed.

Of course, such a process is antithetical to the ways we traditionally think about teaching and learning. Teachers cannot determine ahead of time what students are to learn. This means that they cannot plan a lesson that will get students to that predetermined place and that, hence, they cannot then assess whether or not students got there (Ellsworth, 1997). Teaching, in other words, like learning, cannot be about repetition and affirmation of either the student’s or teacher’s knowledge, but must involve uncertainty, difference, and change. I should note that the goal here is not merely *any* difference, since not all changes will be helpful. Rather, the goal is a change *informed* by these theories of anti-oppression, a change that works against oppression.

Often, this change does not come easily, which leads to the second insight from feminist/queer readings of psychoanalysis: anti-oppressive education involves crisis. Earlier, I critiqued critical pedagogy for its reliance on rationality. Talking about one’s own experience with and complicity in oppression and, perhaps most importantly, learning things that force one to re-learn or *unlearn* (Britzman, 1998a) what one had previously learned cannot always be done rationally. Drawing on the work of Felman (1995), I argue that learning about oppression and unlearning one’s worldview can be upsetting and paralyzing to students, and thus, can lead them into what I call the “paradoxical condition of learning and unlearning” (Kumashiro, 1999a). Students can simultaneously become both “unstuck” (distanced from the ways they have always thought, no longer so complicit with oppression) and “stuck” (intellectually paralyzed so that they need to work through feelings and thoughts before moving on with the more “academic” part of a lesson). Though paradoxical and in some ways traumatic, this condition should be expected: by teaching students that *the very ways in which we think and do things* can be oppressive, teachers should expect their students to get upset.

Consequently, educators need to create a space in their curriculum for students to work through crisis. Felman (1995) discusses how her students worked through a crisis they experienced by giving testimonies of (i.e., by revisiting in different ways) their experiences of the crisis. She argues that teaching and learning really take place only through entering and working through crisis, since it is this process that *moves* a student to a different intellectual/emotional/political space. In noting that both teaching and psychoanalysis involve “liv[ing] through a crisis,” she explains that they both “are called upon to be *performative*, and not just *cognitive*, insofar as they both strive to produce and to enable, *change*. Both . . . are interested not merely in new information, but, primarily, in the capacity of their recipients to *transform themselves* in function of the newness of that information” (p. 56). How so? In revisiting the crisis through testimony, students are not merely repeating the crisis, but are supplementing it, giving it new readings, new meanings, and new associations. This is not unlike the way in which my students supplemented the stereotypes when they wrote and performed a skit about the harmfulness of stereotypes (Kumashiro, 1999a). Laboring to alter citational histories can help students work through crisis.

The recognition that anti-oppressive education involves entering and revisiting crisis in different ways leads to the third insight from feminist/queer read-

ings of psychoanalysis, namely, that anti-oppressive education also involves self-reflexivity (and the change of the individual). I argued earlier that learning about Others is an important step in changing oppression, but that alone this is not enough. Learning about the Other with the goal of empathy often involves seeing how “they” are like “us” (and that, deep down, we are all the same), i.e., it involves seeing the self in the Other, and thus, maintaining the centrality and normalcy of the self. Learning about the Other and about oppression, then, can serve to reinscribe sameness by allowing the privileged Self to see itself no differently than before. In contrast, Britzman (1998a) argues, efforts to challenge oppression need to involve changing the self, rethinking who one is by seeing the Other as an “equal” but on different terms. It should not be the case that a student “looks for [his or her] own image in the other, and hence invests in knowledge as self-reflection and affirmation,” but that, “in the process of coming to know, [the student] invests in the rethinking of the self as an effect of, and condition for, encountering the other as an equal” (p. 81). Thus, a student should engage not only in self-reflection (in which the student asks how he or she is implicated in the dynamics of oppression), but also in self-reflexivity (in which the student brings this knowledge to bear on his or her own sense of self). In order not to reproduce normalcy schools should engage students in the process of separating the normal from the self, significantly changing how they see themselves and who they are.

To put it another way, schools need to queer our understanding of ourselves. By this, I do not mean that we should see the Self in the Other, or the Self as the Other, but that we should deconstruct the Self/Other binary. We might look, for example, at how our sense of normalcy needs, even as it negates, the Other, as heterosexuality does the homosexual Other (Fuss, 1991) or literary Whiteness, the Black shadow (Morrison, 1992). Or, we might look at how the normal is dangerously close to the perverse, as homosociality is to homosexuality, a contiguity that causes “homosexual panic” (Sedgwick, 1991). And then we might ask, how does this knowledge come to bear on my sense of self? By changing how we read normalcy and Otherness, we can change how we read Others and ourselves.

The change this pedagogy will produce cannot, of course, be not known beforehand. Its goal is not, *think like this*, but *think differently* (and not different in *any* way, but different *as informed by these theories*). This brings me back to a central theme of this article, namely, that teaching involves unknowability, which is the fourth insight from feminist/queer readings of psychoanalysis that I find useful for anti-oppressive education. Ellsworth (1997) has argued that the teacher addressing his or her students is not unlike a film addressing its audience, for

no matter how much the film’s mode of address tries to construct a fixed and coherent position within knowledge, gender, race, sexuality, from which the film “should” be read; actual viewers have always read films against their modes of address, and “answered” films from places different from the ones that the films speaks to. (p. 31)

Working against oppression, therefore, should not be about advocating strategies that are always supposed to bring about the desired effect. Consider, for

example, Khayatt's (1997) discussion of the role queer teachers play in challenging heterosexism and homophobia. Critiquing the notion that queer teachers "should" come out (i.e., should disclose their sexual orientation to their students), she points to the different, contradictory ways that students—queer and straight—can read that supposedly empowering act. She does not tell educators not to come out, but argues against making the common assumption that that act has the same meaning to all students. Strategies to bring about change must be situated and must recognize that teaching involves unknowability and that learning involves multiple ways of reading.

In other words, teaching is not a representational act, an unproblematic transmission of knowledge about the world to the student, but is a performative act, constituting reality as it names it, while paradoxically acknowledging that the teacher cannot control how the student reads what the teacher is trying to en-act (Ellsworth, 1997). There is always a space between the teaching and the learning, and rather than try to close that space (and control where and how the student is changed), the teacher should work within that space, embrace that paradox, and explore the possibilities of disruptions and change that reside within the unknowable (Lather, 1998). I argue elsewhere (1999a) that we are not trying to *move to a better place*; rather, we are just trying to *move*. The aspect of oppression that we need to work against is the repetition of sameness, the ongoing citation of the same harmful histories that have traditionally been cited. Although we do not want to *be* (the same), we also do not want to *be better* (since any utopian vision would simply be a different and foretold way to *be*, and thus, a different way to be stuck in a reified sameness); rather, we want to *constantly become*, we want difference, change, newness. And this change cannot come if we close off the space-between.

Often, what resides in that space-between is the unconscious, which is what makes teaching and learning unknowable. Just as Ellsworth (1997) suggests that students always need to look for what is not said/known/visible/thinkable (by/to the student, teacher, text), Britzman (1998a) suggests that educators always need to look for ways in which what we *do not consciously know* (and what we desire not to know) influences our teaching practices. In particular, educators need to consider the multiple ways in which *what we (unconsciously) repress* hinders teaching and learning. She begins by arguing that resistance to knowledge is often an unconscious defense mechanism, like the ego's tendency to repress. Rationalist approaches to teaching cannot address this unconscious desire to ignore. Ironically, what can is exactly what pedagogy typically represses. Like the ego, pedagogy is never in control of itself, and "like the ego[,] subjects itself—in ways it does not notice—to its own unpedagogical anxieties and defenses" (p. 327). In other words, like the ego, pedagogy often does what is harmful to itself, such as by privileging rationalism and repressing other ways of knowing an drelating, such as "touching" (which is what Britzman suggests can lead the ego to desire to know, change, and make reparation). Furthermore, pedagogy traditionally attempts to control and to grasp the knowable, leaving no space open for what is really uncontrollable and unknowable in education; and it attempts to do so out of desire for self-affirmation, desire for sameness and repetition. Education, then, needs to explore the difference produced in the unknowable, such as the uncanny (i.e., the strangely familiar). A pedagogical

example would be reflecting on and revisiting one's own desire to ignore; such an act might bring an uncanny return of the repressed, or allow one to familiarly yet differently revisit how one harms oneself (Kumashiro, in press).

There are, of course, many more helpful insights from psychoanalysis (see, for example, works by such theorists as Derek Briton, Terrance Carson, Madeleine Grumet, Marla Morris, William Pinar, Paula Salvio, and Peter Taubman). Similarly, there are many other theories and frameworks yet to be embraced by many educational researchers (or, perhaps more accurately, by educational researchers in contemporary Western societies). Thus, in addition to further research on the issues raised in this article, researchers need to consider theories and philosophies yet unexplored by the field of educational research. For example, Britzman's discussion of the ego, desire, and uncertainty reminds me of certain aspects of Buddhism, and makes me wonder whether there are insights from, say, Asian philosophies (and African philosophies, indigenous philosophies) that might help us think differently about what it means to teach, to learn, and to engage in anti-oppressive education. This is not to say that we should fully embrace Buddhism in U.S. schools, especially since there are many oppressive aspects within the different Buddhist religions, such as sexism against women. However, just as feminist and queer theorists made use of certain aspects of psychoanalysis (while troubling its weaknesses, such as its sexism and heterosexism), so too can researchers make use of certain aspects of Buddhism (and trouble its weaknesses, such as its sexism or the prescriptiveness of the "eightfold path," described below). Summarizing Buddhism, Hane (1986) writes:

The founder [of Buddhism] taught that the way to overcome suffering was to rid oneself of the sense of the "self." The self that we think of as being real, permanent, and absolute is merely an illusion. Rather, all things are in a constant state of flux; all things are ephemeral. Our suffering comes from the cravings of the self, to gratify the ego. To extinguish the ego one must follow the eightfold path as taught by the Buddha—that is, right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. In this way we will become free of our illusion and thus able to achieve the state of bliss known as *Nirvana*. (p. 13)

The different ways Buddhism conceptualizes oppression, the self, desire, and change remain relatively unexplored by educational researchers (exceptions include Smith, 1997). So too with Confucianism (exceptions include Wang, 1999). With so much of educational research drawing on European philosophers and thinkers (including the ones I have embraced in this article, namely, poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theorists), I cannot help but wonder, what is yet unthinkable in this Eurocentric field of study? While Buddhism (or Confucianism) will not be the panacea, I imagine it can offer new ways of thinking about anti-oppressive education. Future research should further explore these possibilities.

Conclusion

As I call on educators to make use of an amalgam of the four approaches outlined in this article, as well as on researchers to explore more implications of traditionally marginalized or yet-unexplored perspectives on anti-oppressive

education, I acknowledge that engaging in such efforts presupposes a commitment on the part of educators and researchers to subversive views of the purposes of education, of the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and of how we want students and society to change. I also acknowledge that, even with this commitment, the difficulties in implementing changes in our present educational system and in today's political climate are substantial. Yet, I believe this article shows that more and more educators are educating themselves of the dire need to engage in anti-oppressive education, and that more and more educators are making a positive difference in the lives of their students. I expect this trend to continue, and hope that this article helps in this effort.

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