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## Book Reviews

### **Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education: redirecting cultural studies in neoliberal times**

CAMERON McCARTHY & CATHRYN TEASLEY (Eds), 2008

Oxford: Peter Lang

361 pages, paperback, ISBN 978 0 82049 731 0, £16.40

Cameron McCarthy has authored or co-authored many books, including *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* (State University of New York Press, 2003), *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* (Routledge, 2005) and *Globalizing Cultural Studies* (Peter Lang, 2007). This latest collection by Cameron McCarthy is co-edited with Cathryn Teasley, an Adjunct Professor of Curriculum, Instruction and School Organization at the University of A Coruña, Galicia, Spain. The volume follows in what is becoming for McCarthy a determined tradition of critical analysis and cultural agency. Most certainly this recent publication does all of that, although McCarthy & Teasley also offer the reader something new. While the thematic focus of this volume does not deviate from the 'critical' agenda, the mechanisms of engagement do incorporate an 'exercise of transgression' that marks a departure from a more predictable cultural studies approach.

Promoted as a product of transatlantic cooperation in both 'translation' and 'relationality', this collection is said to engender a 'radical contextualization' of predictable centres of inquiry in resisting and deprivileging hegemonic epistemologies of collection and categorization. The stated intention of the book, then, is to encourage 'multiple-border crossing', resisting the Anglo-centred dominance in forms of cultural critique and inquiry. McCarthy & Teasley speak to one of the most intractable criticisms levelled against the field of cultural studies as a historical approach – the criticism of 'Britishness'. Arguably, with cultural studies both mapping and navigating a centre-periphery field of research engagement, the ideals and processes of Western governance scribe a point of reference and divergence. This can result in the traditions and forms of articulated cultural agency resonating in prescriptive ways. The challenge, then, is erected in opposition to the predictability of academic stability, or forms of institutional persistence manifested in centre-periphery models of research and action. This collection attempts to reposition and, to a degree, redefine the task of cultural studies. In doing so, it brings to bear alternative criteria to the intended task of identifying and addressing neo-liberal modalities of economic and cultural dominance. Included here would be the growing effects of expanding 'corporatism' and the 're-feudalization' of the public sphere. Contributors to this collection are marked as outsiders to the field of cultural studies. Educators, policy makers and other stakeholders are asked to connect with linguists and economists, and these academic and national exchanges promote a cross-cultural dialogue, one repositioned through this author/reader association of translation and relationality.

For the editors, the act of translation (taken in the literal sense for many of these articles) bridges cultural gaps that historically have stood as barriers to an effective transformational project. That is, the act of 'cultural translation' facilitates the reciprocity and 'mutual respect' required in mounting a truly intercultural response to the neo-liberal challenge. Contributors represent a broad background of academic and transnational attachments, coming from fields such as psychology, linguistics, English philology, communications studies, sociology and anthropology. They also reveal a diversity of national affiliations that include Argentina, Barbados, El Salvador, Korea, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. With the majority of the contributors writing from outside of the field of cultural studies, the criticism of Britishness is circumvented in exchange for an alternative politic, one promoting fair representation in sponsoring an acceptable quality of life for global populations.

For many of these scholars, publishing in an English-speaking forum represents a rare opportunity to bring to the international stage concerns exercised over/in national contexts. For example, in 'Ethnic Group, Class, and Gender: paradoxes in the education of Moroccans and Roma in Spain', Mariano Fernández-Enguita examines institutions of school, work and family, and the challenges accompanying promoted inclusionary environments (for example, schools). Here, identity associations adjoining ethnicity, class and gender mark distinct relational surroundings for subaltern groups (i.e. Moroccans and Roma). Encounters between school culture and 'cultural identities' can formulate problematic locations as ethnic group and class, or ethnic group and gender, resonate in these settings to generate 'unforeseen effects'. Furthermore, within the scope of universal schooling and its role of both postponing and tempering young people's entrance into the market economy, the 'unproblematic' process of preparation and socialization bears an inimitable relationship within specific ethnicized groupings like the Roma/Gypsies. This becomes particularly relevant if acknowledging the group's historic commitment to alternative economies and distinct patterns of transition to adult life.

In part 2, chapter 8, Emily Noelle Ignacio focuses upon two communities (originating in the United States and El Salvador) and the challenges associated to ameliorating economic and racial inequalities in advancing 'success'. With respect to these successes, Ignacio reviews the civil rights advances of both Archbishop Romero (the Peace Accord in El Salvador) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (affirmative action). Ignacio attempts to understand how the discursive reframing of populist narratives (Romero and King, Jr.) has reinforced the neo-liberal agenda and, in doing so, attenuated the (publicly announced) achievements contributory to the peace process and/or civil rights advances. For Ignacio, the selective reframing of public discourse has exacerbated racisms, quelled multicultural initiatives, and disguised the effects of globalization and an unrestricted market economy. The author's attempt to examine the deleterious effects of coded or co-opted discourses, within specific contexts, contributes significantly to our understandings of the culture of neo-liberalism – at home and abroad.

Jin-kyung Park provides a third example in her article 'Governing Doped Bodies: the World Anti-Doping Agency and the global culture of surveillance'. Here, Park looks at the non-governmental regulating institution the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and its influence on 'developing' nations. Incorporating the language of Foucault, this article draws attention to the 'rationalities' and 'techniques of government' familiar to transnational cultural institutions. Park demonstrates how the governance capacity of the WADA polices athletic bodies. She illustrates how 'First World' technologies are employed to monitor and control 'Third World' nations under the 'age of globalization'. Thus, the control of illicit performance-enhancing drugs becomes yet another means by which the cultural hegemony of the West is exercised in defining and governing acceptable conduct through mechanisms of surveillance and control.

*Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education: redirecting cultural studies in neoliberal times* combines the interdisciplinary voices of firmly established scholars in an attempt to combat a trend (in other cultural studies collections and books) that promotes and defends transnational perspectives and the problematic 'place-boundedness' customs and practices of the British cultural studies tradition. By redirecting the discussion, both in style and content, to other centres of scholastic inquiry, it is the goal of this volume to 'engage and enrich' while shedding the customary means of peremptory organization and iteration. In discarding, or at least assuaging, such a tendency through the principles of 'relationality', 'translation' and 'transgression', the reader is to garner perspective. This perspective is conceptualized via an alternative geography, one repositioned and thus decentred and deprivileged. At least in part, this volume accomplishes this goal, although one cannot overlook that the collection is delivered in a format and language quite familiar to the canonical regimes of 'certainty' and 'predictability' rebuffed by the editors of this text. However, the editors have taken the first step in shifting this centre, commissioning an interdisciplinary collection of works from novel contributors that constitute recent additions to the cultural studies stage. As the editors acknowledge, this volume contains interdisciplinary treatments from individuals who, while firmly established within their specific academic and regional contexts, are relatively fresh to the reader.

*Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education* avoids, to a degree, the field-bound, centre-periphery, organizing trap of 'Britishness'. McCarthy & Teasley avoid the fundamental paradox of a firmly arranged critical scholarship: a methodology that incorporates forms of cultural

inquiry and cultural resistance within a larger purview that is arguably antithetical to post-colonial realities and the neo-liberal challenges of globalization. In its place, we are asked to appraise and synthesize a dispersal of topics and subject positions from geographic and social locations that serve to disorient. We are asked to respond relationally, translate where needed, and be pliant. This seems little to ask of a colleague, given the surprising pervasiveness and protean-like adaptability of the neo-liberal machinery. Our charge is in applying a critical cultural agency within a modulating context, identifying and reacting to a world rapidly and freely penetrated by neo-liberal (social and economic) forms of capital. The Cameron & Teasley text proclaims to 'examine world-hegemonic engagements' with culture within the neo-liberal context of economic and cultural dominance. In doing so, it marks the need for, and pursues, an 'attempted departure' from the contemporary practice and practices of doing cultural studies. Acknowledging its limitations, the volume succeeds at both.

**Douglas Brown**

*University of Regina, Canada*

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### **Journey into Dialogic Pedagogy**

EUGENE MATUSOV, 2009

Hauppauge, NY: Nova

ebook, ISBN 978 1 60876 969 8, US\$69.00

Writing this review made me realize how much one's background influences one's thinking. For example, Freire's writings always raised a little red alarm in me, which I always failed to communicate to my American colleagues. I am thankful to Eugene Matusov for spelling out what exactly bothers us ex-Soviets about Freire – his authoritarian tendencies. Both of us grew up in the Soviet Union at about the same time, know some of the same people and, no doubt, read the same books and watched the same movies. His cultural references and translated Russian jokes all make sense to me.

I just hope other readers will get a sense of the distinct point of view from our corner of the world, and from the last Soviet generation. We all share a heightened sensitivity to totalitarianism: the Westerners may understand what it is, but only Russians, Eastern Europeans, Cubans and the Chinese know what totalitarianism is. We remember how it sounds, how it deceives and seduces, and how it can be resisted. It is an important world view, distinct from both the Western and the post-colonial experiences.

Matusov and I also share the tradition of Russian literary thinking, which often mixes philosophy and literary criticism. Mikhail Bakhtin represents one of the best and most profound examples of a philosopher who could not really write philosophy, and had to explain his world view under the guise of literary criticism. This creates not only the problem of deciphering what Bakhtin could have possibly meant, but also a tendency to continue to use literary devices and moves. For example, Matusov includes a large portion of his classes and conversations, excerpts from books and other stories. This makes the book readable and grounded in practice.

Matusov's project begins with considering several educators who claim to be dialogical, only to find out that none of them really reach Matusov's ideal of dialogical pedagogy. Socrates, Paulo Freire, and Vivian Paley – none quite measure up. Socrates is more of a manipulator than a

dialogist. Freire flirts with authoritarian regimes. I found myself in complete agreement about the first two, but started to wonder by the time Paley came under scrutiny. It is not that I disagree with his analysis; Paley did abandon her usual dialogical approach and impose the 'you can't say you can't play' rule. I disagree with his conclusions. Paley has never claimed to adhere to the dialogical pedagogy, nor should she. Matusov's claim that her solution did not work is not backed up with much evidence or argument. But even if it is right, can dialogue be the only virtue? Can it be the end in itself? Bakhtin certainly wrote something like that, but I am not sure such a position can be defended.

Matusov believes a truly dialogical pedagogy can be developed and established in a regular mass school. His vision of ontological and dialogic pedagogy looks somewhat similar to progressive education: students must make meaning of what they learn and their voices must be represented. As Matusov mentions in the book, I do not believe it is possible. The best we can do is to bring elements and fragments of a truly dialogical relation into the world of education. It is not a small feat, and can mean a great deal to students. But a maximalist program of dialogue that can fix the ills of contemporary education is unrealistic.

One of the most intriguing and troubling chapters is the one on the chronotope. Matusov uses Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to dissect the traditional school, with all of its monological structures, rules, and assumptions. His description, complete with photographs and personal details, is so convincing and so fundamental that I cannot help but wonder, What is it that he is describing? Perhaps some of the basic features of the monological school are the features of the school itself – any school. Indeed, schooling implies selection of curriculum, a certain level of control over the conversation, and following some rules. Can one really imagine a school without these monological structures? Matusov certainly tries.

Matusov's positive examples are very interesting, but do nothing to dispel my doubts. These examples are a voluntary after-school technical club, the Summerhill School, and Matusov's own college classroom. This is OK, but neither of these is located in a compulsory educational system. And I must say, he does not apply the same level of scrutiny to these examples as he does to Paley, Freire, or Socrates. Dialogue is certainly possible when people come to it voluntarily, and even sometimes possible when they do not. But what is the notion of dialogue useful for?

The last chapter explores the limits of dialogue. And even though Matusov remains a believer to the end, I can see fissures in his belief, just because I experienced very similar doubts not long ago. Dialogue, at least in the Buberian and Bakhtinian sense, cannot be essential to being human, because dialogue requires an ability to relate to others. Not all humans possess such ability and, thus, not all have developed the capacity for dialogue. We either have to deny the mentally disabled their humanity or we should not allow the capacity for dialogue to define what is human. We must acknowledge that only a small minority of the world's population can be admitted into the exclusive club of dialogue seekers; some will be excluded because they have no ability and others because they have no interest or cultural predisposition for what we consider to be dialogical relations.

It does comfort me that not only Matusov's and my theories, but many others will probably fail the test of inclusivity. This has happened again and again. Piaget's theory of cognitive development, for example, ignores the fact that most adults who are not white middle and upper class never achieve the formal-operational stage of cognitive development. Erikson's theory is similarly biased towards the Western male. Kohlberg's theory of moral development does not seem to work that well outside of North America and Western Europe and for women. Vygotsky and much of the rest of developmental psychology share the same problem. That is just psychology; the same could be said about grand philosophical world views from Kant to Nietzsche, from Plato to Rawls. The concept of authenticity developed by Charles Taylor, the psychoanalytic theories of the self – almost all definitions of human identity that I know of fail the test to some degree.

The notion of dialogue is useful in its critical function: it sheds light on the limitations and corrosiveness of the monological view of the world, especially in education. It is also very helpful when we build unique and exceptional models of education, such as the School of the Dialogue of Cultures. It fails us when we attempt to universalize it and when we try to apply it to all schools. What works for individual pedagogy does not work well for education reform.

A few words need to be said about Eugene Matusov's methods. He fearlessly codes Socrates as if it was a typical qualitative study material. The results are then presented in tables and numbers. If you had a vague suspicion that Socrates' dialogical credentials are greatly exaggerated, now you will know why. It works less well when he analyses a 30-minute-long read-aloud lesson segment. It is just not clear whether the lesson is representative of the teacher, not to mention of other classrooms. An in-depth analysis of a small data set can be very productive, as long as no implicit or explicit claims of generalizability are made. The book in general consists of theoretical analysis of such small sets of data as well as other books. I particularly enjoyed transcripts of Matusov's teaching; he is a creative and perceptive teacher, and the stories he tells are compelling.

A few minor disappointments will not change the overall impression of this good book but perhaps they can be mentioned nevertheless. The text could have used a little more editing – this particular problem lies with the publisher, not with the author. Matusov has a tendency to reference specific ideas, citing sources without page numbers, which makes it difficult to figure out what exactly he is referencing. Like many other books, this one was probably first written as separate papers. This is just fine, except where the author uses the same citations and the same examples twice or more. The reader may have benefited from stronger connections among the chapters. Although the logic of the book is clearly laid out in the introduction, the reader may not remember it by the middle of the book. It becomes difficult, then, to understand why one is led to the next topic and how it relates to the overall design of the book.

In conclusion, it is an engaging and fruitful journey: captivating, edgy, and perceptive. I highly recommend anyone interested in education to join Eugene Matusov on his journey – you will not be disappointed.

Alexander M. Sidorkin

University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, USA

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**Labor of Learning:  
market and the next generation of educational reform**

ALEXANDER M. SIDORKIN, 2009

Rotterdam: Sense

216 pages, paperback, ISBN 978 9 08790 757 0, US\$49.00

Sidorkin takes a close look at the formal education of schooling from an economic perspective. His description of mass compulsory schooling's main vices – teachers' pedagogical violence and students' non-cooperation with teachers' demands – is different from both individualistic critiques (i.e. bad teachers and bad students) and the Marxist sociological critical claims that the school's main function is to reproduce a society (and that mass school's vices are those embedded in this reproduction).

He argues that the mass schooling industry, as we know it, is not just an inefficient economic industry but also a very violent and abusive one because it is based not on market-regulated economic relations but on a peculiarly archaic economic set of relations: a hybrid of feudal, slavery, and reciprocity-based economies (common in family and village economies). His main argument is that students' school learning is a special labor. By 'labor' he refers to an economic category – recognizing students' learning as unpaid labor that, in his final analysis, must be paid. He criticizes the solutions provided by the education Left and Right and offers his own two solutions: 'sensible' and 'radical'.

Using Marx's analysis of labor, Sidorkin shows that in labor, not only the object of labor is transformed – material things and other people (in the case of services) – but also the subject of labor, the laborer him- or herself, is transformed. In the mainstream industries of the economy, the laborers' learning usually remains in the background of the labor. Self-transformation, learning, is *by-productive* and is important only because it can lead to future higher productivity and better and new products.

In the school economy, the background of the other industries (learning) moves to the foreground and the foreground of the other industries (transformation of things) is relegated to the background. School students transform themselves to produce skills, attitudes, and knowledge in themselves that are needed for other people while teachers help them in this labor process. These new skills, attitudes, and knowledge are needed by future employers for successfully running their businesses, by citizens for civic engagement and democratic participation, by institutions for successful functioning of modern bureaucracies, by doctors for maintaining public health, and so on. The students' school learning will be *consumed by other people* and, hence, it is needed by other people. The broader society needs students' labor in the form of their schoolwork but it wants it for free without any compensation.

Sidorkin's overall argument might have been clearer if he had compared mass compulsory comprehensive schooling and market-based schools. By the latter, I mean formal education that people might buy for their leisure (for example, a ceramics class), personal enhancement (for example, a class on meditation), professional development and training (for example, a class on Java for programmers), credentials to get a job (for example, getting the Microsoft Network certification), and so on. In the former case, there is a relationship of imposition; while in the latter case, there is a relationship of free transaction. In Sidorkin's view, these facts have deep consequences for educational practices. In the former case, both the course curriculum and instruction are unilaterally designed by those who require the students to take the school course. In the latter case, both the course curriculum and instruction have to be negotiated by the students and the course designers.

I also wonder how much compulsory education necessarily shapes itself as *comprehensive*, based on its construction of isolated disciplines and self-contained sums of decontextualized knowledge and skills, rather than being practice-oriented as voluntary schooling usually is. I wonder if this comparison might upset Sidorkin's argumentation. Indeed, a person who voluntarily buys his or her education for its use value apparently benefits from this education as a future consumer of its fruits more than the society. I also wonder how much compulsory schoolwork is actual labor. Specifically, I question Sidorkin's assumption of the use value of schoolwork. The fact that the society claims that school learning is valuable does not mean that it is actually true. Sidorkin does not consider whether ideological claims of school learning's high utilitarian value for the society and/or economy are true.

While Sidorkin shares my view that learning in the contemporary mass compulsory school is ineffective, he does not think this upsets his argument. He points out that mass compulsory schooling can produce waste, like any industry. Schools can make a lot of waste and even a lot of unnecessary waste, but as long as the mass compulsory school produces use value for the society, students' schoolwork retains the status of labor, argues Sidorkin. However, I have an alternative hypothesis that school learning is more or less disconnected from anything outside of school. In short, it is useless. In my view, the issue is not that the school performs poorly or that students do not know much, but that school performance does not affect the well-being of the society. Similarly, as Sidorkin nicely points out, schools are one of the most undemocratic institutions in democratic societies – this fact, however, does not preclude the societies from being democratic. The issue is not that school graduates do not know or do not remember algebra, but that the society can function rather well without a high majority of its citizens knowing algebra. Can we think of learning in the mass compulsory comprehensive school as ritualistic or serving some other purpose (for example, arbitrary sorting of people or babysitting young people excluded from the economy) rather than for labor?

Sidorkin makes a frontal attack on progressive education that is, in my judgment, more devastating than his critique of the Right because he undermines the core principle of progressivism that school learning can and must be non-alienated. He raises an excellent question: Can learning in a mass school be non-alienated from the students' agency on a systematic basis? Sidorkin's answer is no. In contrast to Dewey's view of schooling as a qualitatively new form of guidance demanding new, complex practices that require lengthy and deliberate teaching, Sidorkin argues that schooling emerges as a result of the intensification of the division of labor in the society. In comprehensive schooling, learning of basic skills and fundamental knowledge becomes separated and alienated from apprenticeship and the participatory nature of learning-in-practice. Yet Sidorkin argues that school learning cannot and should not embed itself in the practices from

which it is extracted, as Dewey called for, because learning in practice is by-productive, while in school learning is the main product of the activity.

I respectfully disagree with Sidorkin that economically unproductive learning is inherently alienated for its participants. My biggest challenge to Sidorkin's economic approach to schooling comes from his economic totalizing and reductionism. In my view, economy, like discourse, power, social relations, and so on, presents a *partial*, rather than totalizing view on the human reality. It is true that any human phenomenon can be considered from various perspectives, but these perspectives are limited in their nature and require correction by alternative perspectives. However, I agree that the issue of whether or not it is possible to build a mass institution of learning based on hybrids of non-alienated academic learning activities dominated by process-oriented activities remains open.

Sidorkin is definitely up to something very important and promising when he offers a relational, narrative, and discursive view on motivation. However, he presents an ascetic, purified version of intrinsic motivation for critique. I think he goes too far in ignoring, if not actively denying, two such distinct families of human experiences as (1) ownership for our activities, a sense of flow, authorship, pleasure, meaningfulness, autonomy, and irreducibility, which are often heuristically referred to as 'intrinsic motivation', *versus* (2) imposition, tiresomeness, boredom, meaninglessness, instrumentality, reducibility, and so on, which are often heuristically referred to as 'extrinsic motivation'. Actual human experiences can be complex and usually present some combination of both of these tendencies, but one of these tendencies can be more dominant than the other and this dominance can be dynamic over time.

Sidorkin's 'sensible' solution to the problems of mass compulsory schooling is to focus on and expand what works well in current schools. Since, according to Sidorkin, what works well in mass schooling is the relational reciprocal economy, this relational economy has to be strengthened and promoted. This 'sensible' solution was provided in his previous book (Sidorkin, 2002), but he no longer insists that this is the best solution. He proposes here a 'radical' solution that, in my view, is radical indeed because in this solution, mass compulsory schooling will end as we know it. In sum, Sidorkin wants the society to (1) pay students for their compulsory comprehensive education learning outcomes (cf. Illich, 1983) and (2) equalize children and adults in their legal rights.

There are several aspects of this radical proposal that are very attractive to me. First is the strong separation of summative assessment from education. In Sidorkin's radical model, before testing, students' learning mistakes remain learning-teaching opportunities (i.e. formative assessment) and not a part of their punishment, as it is currently in mass schooling. Second, students become active in decision making about their own education – they can choose where and how to study. Finally, I am very attracted to Sidorkin's legal proposal of emancipation of children into citizenship by giving them equal rights as adults based on their competence rather than age.

I have two major, but related, paradigmatic problems with Sidorkin's radical economic approach to education. First, we apparently disagree about the main purpose of education. Sidorkin seems to define the purpose of school education narrowly as what can be called 'training' or 'apprenticeship to a practice' – as partial mastery and partial competence in an existing practice that helps the students to enter the society and job market. I see the purpose of school education more broadly, as not so much to conform to the existing practices, but to critique and to transcend them as well. My second paradigmatic disagreement with Sidorkin's radical economic approach is that even uncritical mastery of an existing practice cannot be achieved (or even prepared for) through a decontextualized unilateral curriculum of preset, given, self-contained, individualistic skills, knowledge, and attitudes set by the society and tested by testing agencies.

Sidorkin's book is extremely rich with new ideas, approaches, concepts, hypotheses, and, what probably is even more important, new questions. It is very difficult to pinpoint Alexander Sidorkin on the political spectrum. His analysis employs Marx, Foucault, and Bakhtin. He utilizes leftist values of equity, non-violence, and non-alienation. He presents the Right marketplace radical solution to mass schooling. He provides libertarian ideas for children's rights. All this makes him complex and interesting. I feel that with this book, he has become a very important part of my internal and external professional dialogue, and I hope many readers will share this sentiment with me. I admire his thinking outside of the box and boldness in bringing fresh solutions to the problems of mass compulsory comprehensive schooling.

The full version of this review is available at <http://ematusov.soe.udel.edu/vita/publications.htm>

**Eugene Matusov**  
*University of Delaware, Newark, USA*

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