

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

THE PROBLEMATIC

Rationales

The timing is right for asking, Whatever happened to theories of social and cultural reproduction in education? Ironically, though such theories initially flourished in the sociology of education, they have now been taken up in other domains and social theory generally. A recent British anthology seeks to “revivify” the notion of “cultural reproduction” as a “particularly fertile area for social theory” despite it *not* being currently “a fashionable concept” (Jenks, 1993: 1). The present study reflects our longstanding effort to rehabilitate theories of cultural reproduction for the sociology of education.¹ Two obstacles to this process have been (1) the widespread impression that reproduction models had been largely discredited and abandoned—a process reinforced by *postmodernist* attacks on metanarratives and general theory; and (2) a lack of awareness of more recent developments, which often employ somewhat different theoretical terminology and thus disguise the continuity of issues.

Despite the various criticisms and qualifications of the original “correspondence principle” for economically reductionist models, the problematic of social and cultural reproduction continues to be central to critical pedagogy and critical sociologies of schooling. As part of a continuously revised research program, theories of cultural reproduction have incorporated concepts of agency and resistance and expanded the understanding of domination to include nonclass forms of exclusion (race, gender, etc.). More fundamentally, the metatheoretical justification of such theorizing is no longer based on the totalizing, class-based metanarrative as in the case of structuralist Marxism. In this respect, the analysis of cultural reproduction has assumed *poststructuralist* forms²

But the term *reproduction* is still tied closely to earlier debates.

Does it make sense to preserve the term at all? One rationale for preserving the term is that the concept was “seemingly high-jacked” (at least in Britain) by “the orthodoxy of studies in the theory of ideology and neo-Marxisms (Jenks, 1993: 2.). As a consequence, attention was directed away from the more dynamic and flexible forms of analysis evident in other versions of the theory. From this perspective, it becomes plausible to “attempt to liberate the concept back into the wider arena of sociological debate,” a possibility reinforced by the ever-increasing visibility of the work of Pierre Bourdieu in general social theory (Jenks, 1993: 6).

These circumstances have contributed to a couple of theoretical and practical tensions that have accompanied the writing of this study. First, by speaking of social and cultural reproduction, most readers acquainted with contemporary sociological jargon would think most immediately of “Marxist” theories of education. Though there is an element of truth here, part of our objective will be to show the limitations of such a narrow conception of the concept and related problematics which have become central to much of contemporary social theory.

A second tension is reflected in our effort to present a study which is relatively accessible—hence, serviceable as an advanced undergraduate or graduate college or university text—and yet to provide a contribution which synthesizes and/or advances aspects of theoretical debate in the sociology of education and thus is also of interest to researchers. An aspect of dealing with this problem is reflected in attempting to provide an introduction to contemporary social theory *in the context of* educational debates.

The present study builds, of course, on a series of related synthetic critical efforts over the past decade or so. On the one hand, there are pioneering anthologies which introduced the reproduction debates to larger audiences in the English- (Karabel and Halsey, 1977) and Spanish-speaking worlds (Torres and González-Rivera, 1994). On the other hand, there are a number of individual monographs, largely of British origin and now somewhat dated, which have attempted to review and assess the debates at various stages from diverse perspectives and with different audiences in mind.³

There are also a number of other more specialized studies (both theoretical and empirical) which often provide excellent reviews of major issues, but are more concerned with developing a

plea for specific positions within debates in American (or British, etc.) education.⁴ Surprisingly, however, most of this work remains almost completely separated (and this holds in the British context as well) from comparative issues and Third World questions, despite the important collection of papers in Altbach and Kelly (1986) and the contributions of Martin Carnoy and Henry Levin (1985), Joel Samoff (1990) and their collaborators.

As well, there is an extensive literature criticizing theories of social reproduction, most often as associated with structuralist Marxism (e.g., Apple, 1982b; Connell, 1983; Wexler, 1987; Liston, 1988). Generally, however, these studies give a rather hasty critique of reproduction theories, focus on their weakest versions (i.e. structuralist Marxism), ignore functionalist and systems theories in this context, and plunge off in new—however important—directions.

Though we are generally sympathetic with these new directions and their critical stance toward *conventional* reproduction theories (aside from a more adequate understanding of Bourdieu), our objective here is to engage in a more sustained stocktaking of the strengths and weaknesses of reproduction theories viewed from the broader perspective of any effort at developing of the relationship between theories of society and education. The objectives and distinctiveness of our approach can thus be defined in relation to a number of aspects of our treatment:

First, through the unifying concept of reproduction theory, we attempt to provide a more in-depth comparative analysis of structural functionalist and structuralist theories; though these parallels are often mentioned, they are given rather superficial treatment in the literature.

Second, as a necessary aspect of the previous concern, we introduce the metatheoretical and epistemological issues required for an adequate comparison and evaluation of the theoretical perspectives under examination. In particular, the functionalist and structuralist logic underlying reproduction theory discussions is given more thorough attention in this book.

Third, in our discussions of various theoretical perspectives, we attempt to provide a balanced and representative discussion, even as we direct our criticisms toward the development of our own position, which could be broadly characterized as a *practice-oriented, parallel model of cultural reproduction and change*

(Morrow and Torres, 1994), where *practice-oriented* refers to the poststructuralist recognition of the agency-structure dialectic and the historical specificity of analysis, and *parallelist* refers to the recognition of the autonomous interplay of race, class, and gender. Further, by focusing on the culture, structure, and social agency problematic, we attempt to link macro-sociological issues with social-psychological ones in an attempt to bypass the often arbitrary oppositions between approaches found in most discussions.

Fourth, in linking our discussion of education with recent debates on theories of the state, we introduce a dimension that is lacking, or at best cursorily treated, in most of the research developed by people exclusively concerned with either education or theories of the state.

Finally, given our *comparative historical* orientation, we base our discussion on developments in both advanced societies (North America and the English Commonwealth, continental Europe) and peripheral ones (especially Latin America) with social formations closer to the model of European capitalism. In contrast, most of the existing studies focus on a single national context, or remain within an advanced or underdeveloped context.

Social Theory and Education

The whole history of educational thought has developed in the context of a dialogue with the social theory of its time. Social theory encompasses metatheory, on the one hand, and the range of substantive questions entailed in the construction of the theories of society within which sociologies of education are elaborated. In the context of the sociology of education as a “normal science,” to be sure, such models of society can be directly appropriated from sociologists and applied within minor modifications to the study of education. In period of crisis and change—within both social life and sociological theory—however, educational sociology must become more self-reflexive and reconsider its foundational point of departure: the theory of society within which it attempts to analyze the world of educational activities.

We will be focusing on the concept of reproduction in our investigations of educational systems because it provides a convenient synthetic reference point for comparing the full range of conceptions of the relation between society and education. Whatever a sociology of education does, it must make sense of the

contribution of educational activity to the processes of socialization as a source of social continuity and potential discontinuity, or reproduction of the given and production of the new.

In part, the focus on education reflects our interest in contributing to the specific series of debates which have developed in this context. Accordingly, part of our task is to bring to the community of educational theory and the sociology of education some as yet inadequately explored and appreciated contributions *outside of* education (e.g., philosophy of social science, sociology, critical theory, political sociology, etc.)—what can broadly be referred to as “social theory”. In this sense we seek to broaden and enrich the discussion *within* education. One of the functions of our study would thus be to provide an introduction to many of the leading issues of contemporary social theory—especially contemporary macrosociological theory’s concern with the agency/structure problematic—in the context of education.

At the same time, we also direct our discussion toward those *outside of education* proper in order to convey the broader significance of recent work in educational theory and its strategic importance for issues of cultural sociology, theories of the state, and theories of social change and political practice. All too often, discussions in these domains fail to adequately take into account the implications of the research in education. One of our objectives, therefore, would be to make accessible to other students of social theory and cultural studies the rich literature generated by the debates within education, specifically the sociology of education.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN EDUCATION

The Concept of Social Reproduction

How then do these distinctions help us to understand theories of social reproduction and education? First, we must consider what is meant by the notion of a social reproduction theory and then consider its implications in the context of education. Though associated in recent discussions with its origins in Marxist theory, the concept of reproduction actually has roots in several disciplines. From the interdisciplinary perspective of general systems theory, for example, societies are classified as a particular type of living systems: “Social systems are thus defined as *reproducible social structures*” (Barel, 1974: 93). Yet such reproduction does not im-

ply identical replication in either social or biological systems; rather the opposite is suggested: “reproduction implies differentiation, growth, change (continuous or discontinuous)” (Barel, 1974: 93).

To constitute reproduction, however, some fundamental features must be preserved as the basis of the identity of the system, and the concepts of reproduction theory thus “try to describe certain aspects of this capacity for temporary self-persistence of living systems: self-adaptation, self-organization, self-regulation, homeostasis, finality, ultra-stability, etc.” (Barel, 1974: 93). Of particular importance in social reproduction is the effort to determine the elements and relations which are crucial for the transition from one social formation to another. Given that the process of reproduction involves both the dying off of and emergence of social forms, “perhaps what best describes social reproduction is the fact that this reproduction is a unity of *contraries*: unity of social contradictions, unity of change and stability, unity of continuity and discontinuity” (Barel, 1974: 94).

Given the central role of organic, biological models in structural functionalism and systems theories, there has been a reluctance within the Marxist tradition to explore the continuities between reproduction in biological and social systems. But as Giddens—one of the most astute critics of functionalist reasoning in the social sciences—points out, the issue is not the continuity between the natural and social sciences, but the specific form it might take. As he concludes, the continuity is not to be found in the functional analogies about system “needs” which have dominated traditional functionalism, “but rather concern recursive or *self-reproducing* systems”(1979: 75). Of importance here is not so much the theory of automata, which is rather distant from social reality, as “recent conceptions of cellular self-reproduction (autopoiesis) . . . The chief point of connection is undoubtedly recursiveness, taken to characterize autopoietic organization” (1979: 75). Unlike the earlier biological models, autopoiesis includes the possibility of a theory of system contradiction.

Further, Giddens makes a distinction between two levels of reproduction processes in system integration: the homeostatic model of self-regulation found in traditional functionalism (which is redefined as homeostatic causal loops), and the type of reflexive self-regulation where “occur processes of selective ‘information filtering’ whereby strategically placed actors seek reflexively to reg-

ulate the overall conditions of system reproduction either to keep things as they are or to change them" (1984: 27–28). A key aspect of both these forms of reproduction is thus the possibility of "system contradiction."

Social Reproduction and Education

Despite many important differences, models of reproduction applied to educational systems share many specific common analytical features which allow them to be treated together as we have in the present study.

Most fundamentally, they (a) presuppose theories of society as a complex totality, though may restrict (e.g., Weber and neo-Weberians) investigation to empirically observable group relations; (b) take as their object of inquiry relatively complex societies within which formal and specialized educational institutions play a significant role; (c) argue that these educational institutions constitute strategic sites for the stability and further development of these societies; (d) study the relations of mutual interaction between these institutions and the larger society which provide the basis for sociologies of education; (e) suggest that policy formulation within the educational sphere constitutes a crucial context of negotiation and struggle which may have decisive effects on the capacity of society to maintain or transform itself; and (f) consider, paradoxically, that education is either a powerful (and unique) tool for socialization into a given social order or should challenge and resist a hegemonic culture and resulting social practices. In short, educational institutions in theories of social reproduction are linked with power, knowledge, and the moral bases of cultural production and acquisition.

In other words, theories of social reproduction in education point to the interplay between theories of society and education, and hence the larger context which all other forms of the sociology of education (e.g., the study of the school, classroom, curriculum, etc.) must presuppose.

THE CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITION AND EDUCATION

Contemporary discussions of social theory and education presuppose a set of issues and debates which can be traced back to classi-

cal sociological theory, especially the work of Marx and Engels in the mid through later nineteenth century, and of Max Weber in Germany and Emile Durkheim in France in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century (Giddens, 1971). Despite their many and often crucial differences, all of these classical sociologists began with the basic—if somewhat reductionist—proposition enunciated by Durkheim: “educational transformations are always the result and symptom of the social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained” (1977: 166). But they differ in fundamental ways which anticipate the debates and basic positions that emerge by the mid twentieth century: education as a site of ideological reproduction of the interests of the dominant class (Marx and Engels); as integrative institutions essential for social order (Durkheim); and the source of a new principle of control as instrumental rationality or bureaucratic domination (Weber).

Marx and Engels

In the case of education as a site for social and cultural reproduction, for example, the historical materialism of Marx and Engels gives us no explicit answers, despite a number of pathbreaking clues and insights that would be elaborated by later theorists. The central proposition of Marx’s theory of capitalist society is that it should be viewed as a specific mode of production with a peculiar combination of forces of production (technology in the broadest sense) and relations of production (ways of organization and exploiting surplus value or profit from labor). Translated into a theory of society, this argument becomes what is generally referred to as the base-superstructure model, where the economic infrastructure (or base) is held to be the primary determinant of the cultural superstructure, that is, the state, the family, and various specialized cultural institutions (e.g., ideology, law, mass media, religion, etc.), which is required for the stable functioning of such a mode of production as a system of class domination.

Matters have been complicated, however, by the fact that Marx’s base-superstructure model lends itself to two different interpretations. Traditionally, this relationship was seen in mechanical, causal terms as a form of direct economic determination: the nature of the cultural superstructure thus becomes an immediate reflection of the economic base and the interests of the dominant

capitalist class that controls it. Later commentators have argued, however, that this model should be understood in more metaphorical terms, and that the relation between base and superstructure should be seen as reciprocal, giving considerable autonomy to cultural institutions.

A further complication is that the theory of superstructures is not explicitly directed to educational systems, partly because only at higher stages of differentiation of capitalist society has the full significance of educational institutions become evident. Similarly, the theory of ideology has ambiguous implications, especially in the context of the analysis of the cultural presuppositions of educational systems. Marx made allusions to ruling ideologies as those of dominant classes, and his early work is filled with venom regarding the “German ideologists”—typical products of the bourgeois universities of his time. Yet as a general historical thesis, the simple assumption that those who control the means of production necessarily control those of mental production is dubious (e.g., the case of the Middle Ages where education was controlled by the clergy, or even in the case of the advanced welfare states). Such formulations refer to the instrumentalist logic of the base-superstructure model rather than the more complex processes implied by notions such as relative autonomy or cultural reproduction.

More generally, of course, there is a pedagogical motif running throughout Marx’s writings, especially the early ones where the notion of “educating the educators” and the problem of transforming alienated working class consciousness is paramount. And free public education is advanced as one of the goals of “revolution” as envisioned in 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto*. And in *Capital* there is a glimpse of the possibility that capitalism would come to require a more flexible form of labor power linked to the introduction of public elementary education and technical schools:

Modern industry, indeed, compels society under penalty of death to replace the detail-work of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to a mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours, ready to face any change in production and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving fresh scope to his own natural and acquired powers. (*Capital*, vol. 1: 487–88)

On the basis of fragmentary statements such as this, it was possible for Marxist parties and eventually the Soviet Union to develop a conception of "polytechnic education" which sought to combine general individual development and the acquisition of technical skills (Castles and Wüstenberg, 1979). As the Soviet example reminds us, Marx and Engels were concerned with very different kinds of questions. Marx and Engels' reference to education is not coupled with an explicit analysis of public and private educational systems; and given the isolation of revolutionary theory from the educational institutions of the nineteenth century, there is no basis for concern with such sites as locales for working-class struggle. Inevitably, the gradual introduction of mass, public education toward the end of the nineteenth century put education on the agenda of working-class movements as both a right to be demanded and a resource to be controlled (as in the case of Gramsci; see Manacorda, 1977; Labriola, 1977). Yet, on the whole, mass education was introduced selectively in a manner which prevented it from becoming of strategic importance for the formation of revolutionary working-class consciousness; on the contrary, it was the primary context of resocialization and incorporation within an increasingly "mass" if not classless society. Within historical materialism, therefore, education as a focus of inquiry is very much a twentieth-century phenomenon, and as a part of a theory of social reproduction, the product of the past three decades.

Durkheim

In contrast to the belated emergence of educational themes in the Marxist tradition, the strategic significance of mass, public education was recognized at the very beginning of modern functionalist sociology in the work of its founder Emile Durkheim, whose first university appointment was in a faculty of education in France at the turn of the century. For Durkheim, the modern educational system has come to replace the church as the central integrative institution of society and a crucial aspect of the maintenance of social order through its socialization functions. And even Durkheim's educational concerns can be traced back to a consistent principle of bourgeois social theory: to the liberal technocratic vision of French sociology found in Comte, Saint-Simon, and even the French Enlightenment.

Though this educational theme slipped out of sight in the work of functionalist anthropologists, it reemerges in the work of Talcott Parsons, the leading postwar functionalist theorist, whose vision of advanced industrial society is crowned with the “knowledge complex” and the professions as the carriers of technical rationality. Later students built Third World theories of modernization around similar concepts. In a more abstract manner, the same could also be said for information and cybernetic theories where the concept of “information” is given a strategic role in processes of self-regulation and change. Perhaps, therefore, it is appropriate that on the terrain of educational systems, the affinities and differences between (and within) the historical-materialist and systems-functional paradigms and their implications for the problematic of social and cultural reproduction be explored in depth. Only the closely related field of communications and the supposed “information revolution” rival education in this respect.

Weber

Much as in the case of Marx, the explicit influence of the sociology of Max Weber on education has been a belated one. Indirectly, of course, his theory of bureaucracy has been significant in the history of complex organization theory and has some influence within educational administration research. Only by the late 1960s did a specifically neo-Weberian perspective on education emerge. Several distinctive aspects of the Weberian approach are of particular importance to the contrasting examples of Marx and Durkheim.

First, Weber rejects a systems perspective (and hence reproduction theory in the strict sense) at the level of society as a whole in favor of a conception of social integration as social interaction based on the conflicting strategies of concrete groups. Whereas his sense of the prevalence of conflict converges with Marx, he rejects the presupposition that there is a systemic contradiction between labor and capital which inevitably leads to social breakdown. Significantly, however, he does operate with an implicit model of reproduction with respect to his theory of bureaucracy which is the key to his contribution to the sociology of education. Second, Weber also seeks to re-assert the voluntaristic foundations of social action, and hence rejects any purely structuralist or functionalist view of the relationship between structure and agency, a point which follows from the preceding one.

Third, though the state is prominent in Weber's theory, his emphasis is upon its role as an agent of overall societal rationalization and mediator of group conflict, rather than the expression of the interests of a dominant class.

Finally, his approach is developed within the perspective of a strict conception of the distinction between empirical and normative issues which has contributed, at least in his followers, to a "value free" conception of research that has blocked many important directions of inquiry and social criticism.

With respect to education, Weber characteristically shifts attention away from the Marxian focus on the link between education and production to its contribution to the more general process of rationalization. According to Weber, the development of modern educational systems is intimately tied up with three key processes: how expert knowledge is legitimated as the basis of legal bureaucratic domination; how the state constructs the national citizen as a way of undermining traditional communal relations; and how the school becomes the framework for transforming the contractual relations of labor markets into those of a bureaucratic status order based on credentials (Lenhardt, 1984, 1985).

CONCLUSION

A Poststructuralist, Critical-Theory Perspective

Even though we have attempted to provide a balanced treatment of the various approaches surveyed, our overall assessments are grounded in a particular stance toward a critical sociology of education which can be described in relation to (if not as completely identifying with) terms such as *poststructuralist*, *postmodernist*, *post-Marxist*, and *post-liberal*.

Our approach is *poststructuralist* in the more limited sense of acknowledging the flaws of classic structuralist theories and methodologies, especially their determinism and lack of a theory of agency; but it is not *postmodernist* in the sense of rejecting all forms of general theorizing understood in nontotalizing, historical terms.

Our approach is also weakly *post-Marxist* in two senses. Along with contemporary critical theories generally, we acknowledge that the types of theoretical revisions required to understand contemporary realities imply a fundamental break with the Marxist

orthodox tradition. Take, for instance, two of the central (and essential) propositions of a specifically “Marxist” theory of schooling: the correspondence principle itself (i.e., that the social relations of capitalist production are present in the form of the social relations of education) and the primacy of class determinants. Though we find both of these fruitful hypotheses which have generated important empirical findings and theoretical debate, particularly in the political economy of education, we do not think either of these can be sustained as universal laws or propositions in the manner essential to Marxist theory as conceived in the past. But our position is *not* post-Marxist if that is taken to imply that class or political economy has somehow become irrelevant.

Further, our approach is post-Marxist in the political sense that it is acknowledged that the Soviet model of revolutionary change was fundamentally flawed from the outset and that any transformative political project must begin with democratic assumptions that necessarily have a certain continuity with the *liberal democratic* tradition.

Yet this position is also *postliberal* in the sense that liberalism, whether in its neoconservative or progressive (social democratic) forms, cannot be entertained as adequate responses to the current crisis. As critical theory has made abundantly clear, the constraints upon the democratic public sphere call into question the universalistic claims of contemporary democratic systems (Bowles and Gintis, 1986). A postliberal tradition necessarily acknowledges, however, that any socialist project worthy of the name must incorporate principles of democratic participation of a type that are historically without precedent.

Comparative Historical Method

Consistent with the classical sociological tradition, our orientation toward a comparative historical perspective is designed to offset two of the weaknesses of much contemporary educational research, especially in the tradition of reproduction theories. In part, two tendencies have created difficulties: the use of reproduction as a general theory without due concern with the specificities of education as an institutional context; and a tendency for researchers to work within and generalize upon the basis of a single (or limited type of) national experiences. Much research, whether in the structural functionalist or neo-Marxist tradition, has simply “demon-

strated" again and again that specific structures fulfill the designated functions assumed by the theory. A lack of comparative perspective in the case of works in the Marxist tradition stems primarily from obstacles to research funding, a certain reluctance to employ and incorporate into the overall theoretical-methodological perspective techniques of data collection (such as survey research) or statistical data analysis perhaps seen as too closely related to structural-functionalism and empiricist methodologies, and a preoccupation with specific national strategic issues.

Contexts of Educational Research

To study education as a side of social reproduction thus requires consideration of the historical variations in educational systems. On the one hand, it is clear we are concerned with more highly differentiated societies where specialized educational institutions become of increasing importance. On the other hand, even within this delimited context the range of variation among societies is remarkable. To what extent could any theory of social and cultural reproduction claim to deal with such a wide range of cases? One of the practical difficulties in surveying theories of educational reproduction is the variable and often unspecified scope and type of explanation claimed. The systems-functionalist tradition is most weak in this regard, operating within the assumptions of a general theory without adequate criteria of historical specification.

To be sure, the historical materialist tradition gives lip-service to historical specificity, but in practice the structuralist theory of modes of production has tended to serve as a rationale for heavily functionalist and evolutionary analyses which skirt problems of causal evidence and comparative historical method. The historical variations in the relationship between educational systems and different types of societies renders any general theory precarious (cf. Archer, 1984). Yet as we shall see on the basis of the discussion of contemporary research, historical materialism provides a powerful initial thesis with the notion of educational systems existing in a relationship of both correspondence and contradiction with the existing society. The thesis can only provide, however, a general framework for concrete historical investigations.

Though the present study attempts to provide a fairly comprehensive analysis of theories of educational reproduction, it cannot

claim to provide a comparable range of reference to empirical cases. In practice, our interrogation of such theories will tend to move back and forth between two basic types of capitalist social formation, that is, those in which such models have been most actively produced, imported and exported, and applied: the advanced liberal democratic societies characteristic of Western Europe, North America, and the English Commonwealth, on the one hand, and the dependent developed societies of Latin America—characterized by unstable regimes, variable democratic pretensions, large agrarian (peasant) sectors, and serious fiscal and external debt crises—on the other.⁵

Limitations and Objectives

Regrettably, the limited focus of the present study does not allow us to address directly the range of issues concerning a *general* theory of cultural reproduction which would require a consideration of the interrelationship between the different sites of cultural activity, though this question does appear in relation to chapter 12 on the state, as well as in various points along the way.

Further, it has not been our objective to amass and assess systematically *all* of the empirical research pertinent to the assessment of the theories discussed. At times we will address or allude to such research where it has had a strategic impact upon theoretical debate, but our focus of attention lies elsewhere: the origins and theoretical structure and presuppositions of the theories in question, as well as their comparison and general evaluation from a broader historical and comparative perspective.

Outline of the Study

This book is organized into five parts. Part 1, on “Social Theory and Education,” includes this introduction and requires outlining the metatheoretical foundations for such a task, which becomes the basis for a typology of the paradigms of reproduction theory that have influenced debates in education (chapter 2).

Part 2, on “Structural Functionalism and Systems Theories,” considers these as a type of reproduction theory, and then examines in detail the previously dominant functionalist tradition influenced by Talcott Parsons in the United States (chapter 3) and the more recent move to neofunctionalist approaches (chapter 4).

Part 3 is concerned with the variety of conflict-oriented models of educational reproduction associated with the notion of “structuralism” in the European sense, hence the title “Structuralism: Neo-Marxist, and Conflict Theories.” First, the structuralist logic presupposed in different ways by many conflict approaches is taken up (chapter 5). This is followed by a detailed discussion of the French structuralist Marxist tradition (Althusser, Poulantzas) and its theory of correspondence (chapter 6). A second important form of non-Marxist yet still relatively closed reproduction theory, with strong roots in the Durkheimian tradition as well as Marx and Weber, is also reviewed and criticized in the structuralist conflict theories of symbolic capital associated with Pierre Bourdieu and his associates in France; in the related sociolinguistic model of reproduction developed by Basil Bernstein in Britain; and in relation to more recent developments of social-closure theory (chapter 7).

Part 4 is concerned with the reconciliation of agency and structure in social theory—a problematic bequeathed by structuralism and broadly identified with the notion of poststructuralism—and the implications of this reconciliation for theories of educational reproduction. It is titled “The Convergence of Neo-Gramscian and Critical Theories” because it is within these two traditions that a broadly poststructuralist discourse emerges which allows the reconceptualization of the social psychological dynamics of resistance and its relation to transformative social movements. Chapter 8 traces the development of Frankfurt critical theory in relation to education, and chapter 9 is devoted to the Gramscian tradition and its relation to educational theory and research. Chapter 10 then considers the appropriation of European tendencies first within the new sociology of education, and later within British (often neo-Gramscian) cultural studies generally. Further, in chapter 11 parallel developments in the United States are considered in the context of the convergence of critical and neo-Gramscian theory. This is explored in the context of the work of Michael Apple and Henry Giroux and their relation to a tradition of radical democratic populism.

Part 5 shifts to thematic issues: education and the state (chapter 12); race, class, and gender (chapter 13); and postmodernism (chapter 14). Chapter 15, in conclusion, offers a synthesis of the main agendas of social and cultural reproduction, and some of their key dilemmas and paradoxes.

CHAPTER 2

Metatheoretical Foundations

WHY METATHEORY?

In the broadest sense, metatheory is concerned with all of that which goes beyond—or, more precisely, is presupposed by—theory as a substantive or concrete analysis of some aspect of social reality. As theory about theory, metatheory takes up issues associated with the philosophy of social sciences (i.e., epistemology, ontology, ethics, etc.) and methodology (strategies of providing evidence for theoretical propositions). In short, from our perspective metatheory encompasses a set of assumptions about the nature of things (the social world, the nature of science), including the possibility of knowing them, and the normative assumptions required for assessing or evaluating different forms of reality (as a construct), experience (everyday life), and thought (the rational reconstruction of reality, experience, and the history of thought). Metatheory, thus, takes as a necessary and legitimate activity the construction of a metalanguage as distinct from substantive theoretical discourse and/or empirical analysis (whether explanatory or interpretive).

Yet one of the most striking features of debates within and between theoretical paradigms or perspectives is that empirical evidence rarely is sufficient as the basis for choosing between substantive theoretical perspectives. The reason for this is based upon what philosophers refer to now as the *theory-laden* character of facts. In other words, facts are not just brute data lying innocently out there in the social world; rather, they are constructed by and sought after only on the basis of different theoretical perspectives which provide a rationale for the significance of, or the potential existence of, certain types of facts. One of the consequences is that theories are rarely chosen exclusively or even primarily on the basis of their superiority in relation to the facts (though this may eliminate the most outlandish of theories), but on the basis of a whole

series of criteria which only metatheory can reveal and open up for critical assessment.

In this chapter a metatheoretical framework for the study of social reproduction in education is presented. A theory of educational reproduction presupposes both a specific theory of society and a paradigm of sociological theory. Further, these are necessarily macrosociological theories: theories about how the institutions of society are shaped by large-scale structural forces. In contrast, microsociological theories focus on individual interaction, and by their very nature could not be the basis of a theory of educational reproduction and change. Some macrosociological theories do, however, include a significant microsociological or social psychological dimension to their structural analysis.

In contemporary sociological theory it is customary to differentiate a number of theoretical paradigms among which the following will be central to our discussion of the problematic of cultural and educational reproduction: functionalist systems theories, analytical conflict theories, neo-Marxist theories, and post-structuralist critical theories. At this point we do not need to concern ourselves with the often important variants within each type, but to capture the central theme of each approach.

Functionalist systems theories have been historically the most influential within sociology and are based on an organic analogy: societies function like biological systems in that they have differentiated parts that function together to ensure the smooth operation and survival of the organism as a whole. Such an approach is especially concerned with the conditions that maintain social order and stability, and was pioneered by the classical sociologist Emile Durkheim. The most famous version of this approach is the structural-functional theory of Talcott Parsons in the United States.

Neo-Marxist theories represent the most well-known type of conflict theory, one for which the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production, especially those between labor and capital, are taken to be decisive. Further, it is argued that as contradictions, such deep conflicts cannot be resolved within the framework of capitalism, which is consequently inevitably unstable because of various forms of crisis. Neo-Marxist theory differs from that of Marx and Engels primarily because it has attempted to take into account subsequent changes in capitalism, especially the increased importance of massive cultural institutions (such as education and the mass media), as well as the strategic role of the liberal demo-

cratic state. For this reason, some neo-Marxists refer to their approach as an analysis of state monopoly capitalism (Torres, 1985).

Conflict theories assume many different forms. Analytical conflict theories are characterized by an openness to all types of structural conflict, and the struggles related to class are central but not the only ones. Analytical conflict theories have been strongly influenced by the example of Max Weber and can be broadly labeled as neo-Weberian in this sense. From this perspective, group struggle is an inherent feature of social life, though the specific forms of conflict vary in different types of society.

Finally, critical theories represent a new type of theorizing that has been influenced by both neo-Marxist and conflict theory traditions. They are distinguished from the neo-Marxist tradition in rejecting the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the primacy of class and economic determinants in the last instance, and in stressing the multidimensionality of power relations and the role of agency and social movements in social change. Further, the principle of emancipation is extended from that of class—which still retains its strategic place in social struggle—to other sources of potential domination and/or exploitation, including gender, race, and religion, as well as the complex of issues relating to self-sustaining economic development and peace (as expressed in the ecology and peace movements).

All these sociological frameworks seem to share a basic understanding of reproduction processes in capitalist societies. However, they have striking differences among themselves regarding both their elaboration of the notion of reproduction as well as their analytical logic-in-use in producing research findings in education.

Accordingly, we argue that there is *no single general reproduction theory as such*, but that reproduction processes constitute a fundamental problematic which has been tackled in contemporary sociological theory in many different ways. This problematic includes social, cultural, economic, and ideological dimensions of reproduction which may involve simple reproduction, complex reproduction, and, potentially, social transformation.

It is in the context of these multiple sociological, political, and educational debates that the concept of social reproduction is widely used and ought to be studied. Our initial task is thus to define theories of social reproduction and outline the relationships between metatheoretical perspectives, sociological paradigms, and theories of social reproduction in education.