
Remapping Pedagogical Boundaries: Critical Pedagogy, Feminism, and a Discourse of Possibility

The wider movements in feminist theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism, cultural studies, literary theory, and in the arts are now addressing the issue of pedagogy within a politics of cultural difference that offers new hope for a deteriorating field . . . Refusing to reduce the concept to the practice of knowledge and skills transmission the new work on pedagogy has been taken up as a form of political and cultural production deeply implicated in the construction of knowledge, subjectivities, and social relations.¹

The refiguring of pedagogical practices within broader paradigms is a fundamental step in the extension of a democratic politics of transformation into spaces other than the school setting. We need to recognize, as educators and cultural workers in general, the changes in social theory that are taking place in different fields in order to respond to actual needs and develop more empowering forms of theory and practice.²

As already stated in the general introduction to this work, in taking into account the transformation that social theory has been undergoing, the purpose of this book is to remap the linguistic, social, and theoretical boundaries among pedagogy, feminism, democracy, and discourse. In doing so, I argue that pedagogy is central to any language of democracy. Furthermore, I argue that for any language of democracy to be taken seriously, it must link not only the pedagogical to the political but must be taken up in a way that engages the specificity of contexts in which people translate private concerns into public issues. Among the diversity of discourses available, feminism seems to me to offer the best opportunity for examining these issues, particularly a feminism that engages a politics of difference. That is, in discussing wider pedagogical practices, I extend the notion of the pedagogical so as to give it a political project. In doing so, I organize my work around a politics of difference informed

by the project of critical democracy, making central as its primary constituent the issue of critical pedagogy in its relationship to feminist theory.

In this chapter, by arguing for a remapping of pedagogical boundaries, I will be sketching the movement of my thought in a way that illustrates the story of my theoretical journey or, better expressed, the broadening politicization of my consciousness and discursive baggage. Recognizing the link between the production of power and cultural production and, within the latter, pedagogical practices as producing knowledge, subjectivities and social relations is a journey in itself. This journey is both intellectual and political, since forms of knowledge production and subjectivity formation set the terms in which we perceive not only ourselves, but the physical and social world we live in.³ In arguing for more emancipatory pedagogical practices, I propose more dialectical forms of learning and knowing that take into account the historicity and, therefore, the contingency of current structures of power and culture. That is, by engaging myself in this journey for change, I am trying to encourage others to join in the process and break with oppressive paradigms by taking up the ongoing struggle for more democratic forms of life.

I structured this chapter in three sections. In the first one, in a way that reflects the process I underwent, I try to come to grips with previous critical theoretical approaches, resignifying them both in terms of the discourse of critique they provide and the shortcomings they have in failing to develop more dialectical conceptualizations of structure and agency. Although this is not a thorough historical account, it seems important to me to point out some of the narratives that were more influential in Argentina after the democratic order was re-established, and to re-assess them within the framework of a discourse of critique and possibility. In the second section, after setting the main categories of critical pedagogy, I concentrate on the task of providing a more precise conceptualization of pedagogy, pointing at the remapping process it is undergoing by being recognized as a practice that takes place in multiplicity of spaces, besides the school setting, broadening its limits to cultural work. In the last section, having stated the unavoidable political character of pedagogical practices and the fundamental role of cultural workers in taking up questions of democratization and revitalization of public life, I proceed to explore the possibilities of a more radical democratic imaginary that engages a politics of difference. I not only engage myself in the kind of intellectual journey I think cultural workers should undertake, but I also try to broaden theoretical paradigms by addressing pedagogical practices within feminist theorizing.

IN SEARCH OF A PEDAGOGY OF CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP

Historically, traditional liberal educational discourses have discussed schooling as providing opportunities for individual improvement, social mobility, and

economical and political betterment to marginalized sectors of the population such as the poor, ethnic minorities, and women. These discourses have been very much disseminated in Latin America through the different kinds of educational campaigns and programs funded by the United Nations and other international institutions—like the World Bank—within the diverse countries. The emergence of critical reproduction theory challenged this conception of education, rejecting the assumed neutral and apolitical structure of schools and pointing out that these institutions were social and cultural agencies very much involved in the legitimation and reproduction of dominant material and ideological conditions.⁴ Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux provide a critical discussion of the possibilities and shortcomings of three important theories within the reproduction paradigm of schooling which I consider important to address. These theories had a major impact in the first stages of theorization that the Argentine university engaged in at the beginning of the democratic order in 1984.⁵

The first model is the economic-reproductive, represented mainly by the works of Althusser, Baudelot and Establet, and Bowles and Gintis.⁶ These theorists analyzed the links between the economic structure of society and the transmission of certain skills and knowledges to determined social sectors in order to perpetuate the current system. A fundamental concept here is the term “hidden curriculum” as it “refers to those classroom social relations that embody specific messages which legitimize the particular views of work, authority, social rules, and values that sustain capitalist logic and rationality, particularly as manifested in the workplace.”⁷ The strength of this approach includes a discussion of education and its interrelationship with the wider society, particularly the social restructuring of the capitalist economic system.

Another model is the cultural-reproductive, represented mainly by the work of Pierre Bourdieu.⁸ The central tenet of this perspective is the analysis of the mediating role of culture in the reproduction of class societies, resulting in an empowering study of the dynamic of class, culture and domination. A concept fundamental in this perspective is the term ‘habitus,’ conceived as “a set of internalized competencies and structured needs, an internalized style of knowing and relating to the world that is grounded in the body itself.”⁹ This concept is significant in the sense that it moves the idea of learning beyond intellectual processes to acknowledge the body, senses and emotions in order to go beyond merely intellectual or rationalistic considerations.

The last model is the hegemonic-state reproductive one. Within this paradigm, the analysis is centered around the complexity of the role of the state in the educational system, leading to diverse discussions about credentialism, access, expertise and providing important categories to analyze content and form within the official distribution of knowledge. Gramsci’s conceptions of state and hegemony have been key categories in this work. Relevant and important work has been done by Michael Apple.¹⁰

It can be said that critical reproduction theory represented a challenging alternate discourse to traditional educational theory, but by not addressing questions of experience and agency it failed to provide a project of transformation that would enable educators to move from a feeling of despair to concrete strategies of change in light of an emancipatory vision.¹¹

Another alternate discourse to dominant liberal educational theory representing a step beyond reproduction theory is resistance theory. This new approach considered the capacity of individuals and groups to contest hegemonic control, creating a new framework in which domination-resistance tension was apparent.¹² In Weiler's terms "the concept of resistance emphasizes that individuals are not simply acted upon by abstract 'structures' but negotiate, struggle, and create meaning of their own."¹³ In this way, resistance theory provided the possibility to perceive human agency and action in the school setting: a challenge which reproduction theory had completely ignored. The work on resistance theory has been mainly undertaken by critical sociologists and cultural theorists associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. A key work is Paul Willis's study of working-class boys, *Learning to Labour*.¹⁴ Aronowitz and Giroux developed an important critical analysis of resistance theory which revealed its empowering elements and also its limitations.¹⁵ According to them, a problematic aspect of resistance theory was the perpetuation of the division between structure and human agency, and the consequent failure to provide a dialectical perception of either. Additionally, resistance theory did not take oppression into account along lines of gender and race, and remained within the classical parameters of the economic structure. It also failed to point out how oppression and domination are internalized, creating the need for a critical psychology to uncover and transform those processes. It is important to mention Paulo Freire, the Brazilian pedagogue, who powerfully theorized this phenomenon of internalized oppression and developed a brilliant strategy through his conceptualization of conscientization and problem posing.¹⁶ Resistance theory also limited itself to the analysis of overt acts of resistance by students, not considering other behaviors that are less visible and could be mistaken for acts of compliance.

Moving from reproduction phenomena to a definite focus on production phenomena more complex than resistance theory, critical pedagogy next constitutes the most significant and fertile source of critique and possibility in the current social and cultural theorization.¹⁷ Critical pedagogy provides a dialectical perception of the relation between structure and human agency, recognizing the different processes of mediation through which teachers and students produce and reproduce their conditions of existence. Rather than getting stuck in a reproductive framework or romanticizing teachers' and students' acts of contestation in an unproblematic way, this approach perceives school settings

as spaces where struggle and contradictions are enacted in no linear or determined way, giving place to negotiation and the development of a project of transformation. This project of transformation is what Henry Giroux calls a discourse of possibility. That is, to a needed but not sufficient discourse of critique we can add now a discourse of possibility that provides the elements to work for change.¹⁸

Critical educational theory makes available a whole set of empowering categories of inquiry, reconceptualizing pedagogy in ways that move away from both traditional conservative and liberal positions and also transcend reproductive paradigms of critique. But critical pedagogy is not a unified and coherent set of ideas, "it is more accurate to say that critical theorists are unified in their objectives: to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices."¹⁹ Drawing heavily from Henry Giroux's work, the most productive theorist within this tradition, I would like to offer some of the key categories and conceptualizations that structure this new paradigm.²⁰

First category: the expansion of the notion of the political as permeating the whole social order. Furthermore, power and control are understood not only in negative terms but also in their capacity to create a different social order.

Second category: the combination of a discourse of critique with one of possibility, empowering subjects to become agents in a process of both social transformation and also reaffirmation and reformulation of their histories and experiences in view of better and more emancipatory concerns.

Third category: the reconstitution of the teaching practice, moving it beyond either mere technical concerns or elitist professional interests, and conceiving of the teacher as a transformative intellectual in need of critically engaging current social and cultural forms within a wider project of transformation with other cultural workers.²¹

And the last category: the contestation of reductionist constructions of the school as a neutral space, recognizing it as a site of struggle among dominant and subordinate cultural practices along diverse axes of power such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation.

Finally, the question arises: how is it possible to define pedagogical practices within this critical framework in a more concrete and precise way? What terms are necessary to conceptualize the relationship between culture and pedagogy?

WHAT IS PEDAGOGY, ANYWAY?

Pedagogy refers to a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced among particular sets of social relations . . . a practice through which people are incited to acquire a particular "moral character."²²

What I find empowering in this definition is that it addresses questions of both knowledge and identity production and their connection within power relations. How knowledge gets produced/communicated and how students participate in the process as either objects or subjects are fundamental political aspects to be taken into account. All these elements speak for a practice that is about much more than teaching strategies or concerns of mere practitioners. That is, pedagogy refers to a necessary dynamic of theory and practice with political and ethical concerns leading the process of reflection and reorganization. These concerns should be structured around a fundamental emancipatory discourse of equality, freedom and justice, and should aim at a democratic vision.

Within the academic tradition of the Argentine university, which is mostly European, questions of pedagogy according to the dominant paradigm—which ignores radical discourses such as the Freirean, accusing it of trespassing disciplinary borders—refer exclusively to the philosophy of education, while teaching and instruction constitute the field of didactics. Within a different tradition, pedagogy is not a common word for those in the American university educational field who do not have contact with critical theory, since this perspective is the one that reclaims and reformulates the term. Rather, the language of technique articulates talk about “learning,” “teaching” and “educational objectives.” Although differently located, what is missing from both dominant approaches is an understanding of how pedagogical practices are about much more than removed philosophical foundations or the immediacy of teaching strategies. Pedagogical practices, in a broader sense, are about the kind of social visions they would support.²³ That is, all those involved in pedagogical practices cannot avoid the fact that these take place in concrete settings within the wider society in which questions of power are articulated among such issues as What is to be included and what excluded as legitimate knowledge for learning? Or, whose story is worthy most? What kinds of social relations are being promoted? What forms of learning are articulated that, at the same time, configure ways of engaging and perceiving ourselves as subjects or passive objects within the world we live in? What kind of representations are being constructed “of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment.”²⁴ This mode of inquiry situates us within a completely different tradition as we reinterpret pedagogy as a form of cultural politics. This discursive organization, by acknowledging power as productive, allows one to see how it works through people, knowledge and desire in a normative way, which means, in turn, organizing life and its possibilities in a certain form and direction.²⁵ There is a tight link between power and culture that determines certain modes of semiotic production which are “historically and economically constituted by the social forms within which we live our lives.”²⁶ Therefore, “the production of various forms of image, text, gesture and talk . . . have to be understood as integral to

the possibility of either the reproduction or transformation of any social order.”²⁷ Where is the work of educators located within this conceptualization? Obviously, within semiotic production. Furthermore, the term educator should be expanded beyond the limits of the school setting and, best of all, the term of cultural worker might be an alternate frame for this more liberatory perception. After all, pedagogical practices, as put forth in this book, take place within diversity of institutional contexts and not only within the school setting. That is, spheres of cultural production in general are engaged in the construction and negotiation of knowledge and identities. Therefore, pedagogical practices speak to broader cultural and social concerns. Pedagogy, as already stated, is about cultural politics. If that is so, pedagogical practices require the involvement not only of educators, but of cultural workers in general to engage in the task of reforming all spheres of cultural production according to a democratic vision “as part of a wider revitalization of public life.”²⁸ In the words of Henry Giroux, “It is imperative for cultural workers to provide in their work and actions the basis for a language of solidarity and a project of possibility as part of a new vision and attempt to rethink the meaning of democratic citizenship . . .”²⁹

ABOUT RADICAL IMAGINARIES AND TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES

Pedagogy is simultaneously about the knowledge and practices that teachers, cultural workers, and students might engage in together and the cultural politics such practices support. It is in this sense that to propose a pedagogy is at the same time to construct a political vision.³⁰

As stated earlier, it is important that educational theory take into account theoretical developments in a diversity of fields within social theory. The failure to do so would produce impoverished levels of reflection and shortsighted political projects with no empowering effect relative to the current challenges facing education in general and democratic forms of life worldwide. Diversity of forms of domination and oppression, like sexism, homophobia, racism, unquestionable views of cultural heritage, and growing bureaucratic control within schools, are calling for a renewed democratic imaginary.³¹ By this, I mean a project of life, and a vision of a better social and material world. This new vision should be a radical democratic one speaking to difference, forms of dissent rather than enforced consent, change, and multiple forms of power and authority. A critical pedagogy that produces diversity of knowledge and subjectivities contesting domination and oppression is a fundamental practice for more egalitarian forms of life. This notion of radical democratic forms of life is expanded in the second chapter of this book.

In the context of the current feminist movement, especially with regard to feminist work oriented toward uncovering the link of specific oppressions of women to the larger structure of capitalism, and to oppressions of other groups—gays, minorities, the working classes, and so on—issues such as difference, the possibility of engaging in dialogue in spite of heterogeneity, and women's representations through language emerge in the process of theory making. That is, feminist pedagogy linked to critical and liberatory concerns that extend to other oppressed groups besides women, seems to offer an empowering articulation of those questions that are also part of the work of postcolonialism, poststructuralism, critical literary theory, and other theoretical fields that are undergoing radical renewal.³² This section concentrates on the particular work of Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman.³³ Analyzing a concrete articulation of theory and experience not only speaks louder and stronger, but also provides living voices and experiences to this process of reflection. Therefore, written in the tradition of critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and a critical cultural perspective, I argue for a more radical democratic imaginary by considering important aspects developed by Lugones and Spelman such as the ideas of plurality, difference, love and voice. I also try to incorporate these ideas into a pedagogical proposal. Several general assumptions underlying this analysis are:

- The need to develop a theory by theorizing the practice, what Giroux would refer to as a theory emerging in concrete settings, although not collapsing in them, in order to analyze them critically and get into action “on the basis of an informed praxis;”³⁴
- The need to use a language of critique and, at the same time, a language of possibility to not only recognize injustice, but also to develop a project of emancipation;
- The use of concepts, such as voice and dialogue, not only in the tradition of critical pedagogy, but also enriched with the perspective of Bakhtin's theory, to deconstruct and reconstruct the terrain of everyday life;³⁵
- The need to have a conception of the subject, in the context of the current controversy about this topic, to develop political action and a sense of agency.³⁶

Before analyzing the elements of Lugones' and Spelman's work that I find empowering, I will provide a general overview of the content of the articles selected. The two articles I chose are organized in a two step process: a dialectic beginning theorizing lived experience and going back to practice with a transformative proposal. In “Have we got a theory for you!:Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for the ‘woman's voice’” (1983), they

state the necessary conditions and considerations required for women of different races and cultures to engage together in feminist theorizing, dealing with the concepts of difference, plurality, solidarity, dialogue, voice, identity, experience, talking, and hearing. They articulate all these concepts in a way reminiscent of Gayatri Spivak:

The problem of human discourse is generally seen as articulating itself in the play of three shifting “concepts”: language, world, and consciousness. We know no world that is not organized as a language, we operate with no other consciousness but one structured as language-languages that we cannot possess, for we are operated by those languages as well. The category of language, then, embraces the categories of world and consciousness even as it is determined by them.³⁷

This statement points at both the role of the material and the discursive in shaping life, but it stresses the effect of language in an attempt to focus theoretical discussion around the need to transform language as part of the wider strategy to change the world. Work on discourse and language constitutes an important trend in contemporary social theory. Lugones and Spelman take up the issue of language to assert the necessity and the possibility of creating new concepts, and of developing a theory to name the “others,” in this case women’s experiences.³⁸ In this process of women naming, theorizing and interpreting their own experiences, the hierarchy between theorists and doers is erased. There is no place for an elite giving a language to name; rather, this place should be taken by all women—and all those in positions of oppression—to make sense of their own lives. With respect to this, I can recall Gayatri Spivak again when she asserts the importance of recognizing a subaltern subject-effect to transcend the danger of working with intellectual traditions so entangled with the sociocultural context that diverse forms of domination like imperialism, patriarchy, racism, slip elusively into the mind.³⁹ Additionally, when Lugones and Spelman ask the following, they posit the need of the outsider and the insider to engage in a dialogue where they are both outsider and insider with respect to each other.

To what extent are our experiences and their articulation affected by our being a colonized people [outsider], and thus by your [insider] culture, theories and conceptions?⁴⁰

The motivation for engaging in dialogue is love and friendship as opposed to domination and oppression.⁴¹ An ethical concern, indeed.

In the second article, “Playfulness, ‘world’-travelling, and loving perception” (1987) written only by Lugones, she describes the experience of what she

refers to as “outsiders” to the mainstream, and characterizes a practice that is recognized as the only way of theorizing. This way, world-travelling with a playful attitude, meaning a loving way of being and living, is to Maria Lugones the condition for enriching feminism with plurality, a central need of feminist ontology and epistemology within the context of the current competition in feminism. Although the articles deal with many aspects and considerations, this text addresses only those that are crucial in the constitution of a democratic imaginary and the development of a transformative feminist pedagogy.

The first consideration is the question of dialogue. Lugones states that in order to engage in dialogue, it is necessary not to erase differences; rather, these should be preserved as a precondition for dialogue. In the prologue (written in Spanish), Lugones argues that solidarity should not be confused with absence of difference, because solidarity requires the recognition, understanding, respect and love which leads women to cry in a different way. Furthermore, dialogue requires two voices, not one, because one would mean somebody’s oppression and silence.

The question of difference, structured along a power tension, is both a postmodern and a postcolonial concern. Lugones’s theoretical position once again recalls Spivak, specifically with regard to what she refers to as speaking in first person and third person. Spivak would refer to the first person as “the privatist cry of heroic liberal women,” and Lugones and Spelman as “white-Anglo, middle class, heterosexual Christian or not self-identified non-Christian women.”⁴² But why do they refer to the first person as being white women? Because they are the ones in the place of privilege doing theory, while the third person has been the place of blacks, Hispanics, working class, and other women. On the other hand, although Lugones and Spelman recognize the categories of insider/first person, outsider/third person, they consider them a duality—rather than a binary—opposition, not excluding one another, both interplaying and interchanging. Lugones and Spelman argue, “we write together, . . . when we speak in unison . . . there are two voices and not just one.”⁴³

As a second consideration, the place Lugones and Spelman assign to women’s experiences and their articulation in language seems important to me. That is, the question of what is said about experience, who says it, and to whom. Talking about women’s experiences is of particular importance because what is being said and what ideas are held about them, have material consequences. Lugones and Spelman assert, “our experiences are deeply influenced by what is said about them.”⁴⁴

There is the need to hear the “woman’s voice”—although not in an essentialist conception, rather as located within historical and cultural terms—as a central concept to the development of feminist theory. Here Lugones and Spelman introduce a particular conception of the subject, one they refer to in these terms,

The concept of the woman's voice . . . presupposes a theory according to which our identities as human beings are actually compound identities, a kind of fusion or confusion of our otherwise separate identities as women or men, as black or brown or white.⁴⁵

The subject for Lugones and Spelman seems to be somewhere in the middle between the humanistic one, as pre-given, and the decentered one, as a structural determination. Their concept of the subject seems to me the one Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as a multiplicity of voices.⁴⁶ Voice recalls the idea of utterance and, consequently, must be placed in dialogue. Language, as dialogue, consists of social phenomena always in the process of becoming. Individuals do not receive a ready-made language at all, they enter into social communication and in this process their consciousness is constructed, being active in the transformation of the communication process. This aspect is of special importance since it imparts a sense of agency; it stresses the role of the individual in the transformation process as well as the role of the community. In this way, multiplicity is not only recognized in the different voices that emerge in the community, but also in what Vygotsky refers to as inner-thought, an internalized dialogue.⁴⁷ Finally, this subject of multiple voices seems to be what Lugones and Spelman refer to as "compound identities," as the different voices depending on the positions the subject has taken or has been given; that is to say, a positioned subject.⁴⁸

As a third consideration, I would like to take into account the way Lugones and Spelman reflect over the theory-making process, to which they refer in the significant subtitle of the article as "Ways of talking or being talked . . ."⁴⁹ One aspect is that a theory can be useful if it helps to make sense of one's life through the use of concepts that are not foreign. Furthermore, a theory would be useful if it helps one understand her/his location in the world using new concepts that do not mystify the world, but rather, empower one to realize if one "is responsible or not for being in that location."⁵⁰ The most powerful claim the authors make while uncovering power relations is when they state that a theory, to be useful, should not only reflect the "situation and values of the theorist," but also those of the "people it is meant to be about."⁵¹ In an insightful inquiring style through which they posit fundamental pedagogical questions, the authors ask:

As we make theory and offer it up to others, what do we assume is the connection between theory and consciousness? Do we expect others to read theory, . . . believe it . . . and have their consciousness and lives thereby transformed? Do we think people come to consciousness by reading? Only by reading?⁵²

With these questions, Lugones and Spelman challenge oppressive pedagogies that conceive knowledge as something ready to be transferred, and

learners as passive objects. As an alternate emancipatory position they propose the active participation of learners as subjects in the process of knowledge production, since knowledge itself is a dynamic. Undoubtedly, there is the ethical need to listen to the voice of “the other” in the process of theory-making, and also to extend this process beyond academic intellectuals to other groups in order to enlarge public spaces, empowering them to reflect and theorize over their everyday life, and to practice making connections with the wider society. As an explanation, Lugones and Spelman add that “theory-makers and their methods and concepts constitute a community of people and of shared meanings.”⁵³ There is an explicit connection here between the sociocultural and the theoretical-epistemological, a connection also stressed by Spivak in the relation of “the micro-politics of the academy” to the “macro-narrative of imperialism.”⁵⁴ By asserting the idea of community, the authors challenge Basil Bernstein’s position of insisting that “theoretical terms and statements have meanings not tied to a local relationship and to a local social structure.”⁵⁵ Rather, Lugones and Spelman believe a theory is made in a specific time and place and is closely related or enacted by particular interests.

Lugones’s idea of “world”-travelling is the fourth and last consideration. She succeeds in explaining how individuals are dependent on each other to be understood, intelligible, integrated; to make sense. Being dependent does not mean being subordinate, a slave or a servant; rather, being dependent means travelling to another’s worlds in order “to be” through loving each other. Lugones would say that by travelling to another’s worlds allows us to “understand what is to be them and what is to be ourselves in their eyes,” a necessary condition for plurality, which is also a central feature of feminist ontology and epistemology.⁵⁶ Lugones’s idea of “world”-travelling may be compared to Henry Giroux’s proposal of a border pedagogy, a practice that enables people to recognize the partialities of all discourses, experiences, and codes, and which stresses the need to become a border-crosser in order to decenter ourselves and remap meanings, concrete relations, and lives in more equalitarian ways.⁵⁷

At this point, I would like to articulate the ideas of plurality, difference, love and voice in the development of a transformative feminist pedagogy of difference by posing the following questions:

- In what sense is dialogue through difference significant for pedagogical practices, and particularly for the wider practice of social change?
- In what way is the conception of the subject as “compound identities” significant? What about agency?
- Considering pedagogical spheres as places where knowledge and theory are produced, in what sense is Lugones and Spelman’s proposal of a community-building theory empowering?

- In what ways does Lugones' proposal of "world"-travelling offer both a language of critique and a language of possibility?
- What is the political project arising from this pedagogy of difference?

The common sense approach to difference in education has been to act as if there are no differences, as if "we are all equal." This approach attempts to erase diversity and to unify people in a consensual discourse. But to treat people "as if" there were no differences does not make it so. When we realize whose educational discourse is adopted in the name of equality, we come to understand that difference is merely negated for the benefit of those who are not defined, or are less vulnerable with respect to categories such as sex, ethnicity, or class: that is to say, the white male middle class. This discourse creates concrete oppressive situations where many are silenced: for example, blacks, who are forced to become "raceless" if they want to succeed in the current educational settings; or women, who are forced to acquire male rational patterns to be accepted in the academy; or even minority women, who are forced to accept definitions of women as women in feminist theorizing, being silenced with respect to their race, class, religion, sexual alliance, and ethnicity.⁵⁸ The invisibility of the white middle-class pattern, and, in turn, the invisibility of white middle-class heterosexual Christian women or, as Lugones would say, "not self-identified as non-Christian," becomes dangerous in the process of silencing. A transformative feminist pedagogy should be one that addresses difference in all its possibilities within power relations in a constant process of contestation against concrete oppressive practices. In the words of Henry Giroux,

The notion of difference must be seen in relational terms that link it to a broader politics that deepens the possibility for reconstructing democracy and schools as democratic public spheres.⁵⁹

Dialogue, as Lugones posits, enables women and other oppressed groups to interrelate among themselves, to talk together in different voices, addressing the differences that make them outsiders and insiders with respect to each other.

Addressing the second question, the conception of the subject as "compound identities" points to a pedagogy that recognizes not only multiplicity of subject positions, but also the tension among them. Minority women, in particular, can begin to conceptualize themselves in terms of what it means for them to be women as blacks, lesbians, poor, Hispanics, or Jews. Furthermore, another aspect that Lugones and Spelman mention, and I would like to stress, refers to women having to define themselves as women outside their communities. This results when Anglo-individualistic patterns are disguised as universal. For example, this is the case of Hispanic women resisting patriarchy by

alienating themselves from their communities. What may be a powerful strategy for white women turns to be a painful alienation for Hispanic ones. I see as very problematic a feminism that fails to address transformation in the context of communities, limiting agency, and reducing definitions of self to individualism. I use the term community recognizing difference within it, not ignoring diversity under an impossible and oppressive homogeneity. Maria Lugones, arguing for the need to travel through others' worlds in a playful and loving way as opposed to an imperialistic one, states:

We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking.⁶⁰

Any pedagogical practice is about the production of subjectivities. A transformative feminist pedagogy should disclose how subjectivities—particularly gendered—are being constructed and/or represented outside and inside the school setting, and enhance the development of “compound identities.” A pedagogy of difference not only has to assert students' multiplicity of voices, but also deconstruct them, see how they have become what they are, challenge problematic sexist and racist assumptions within them, and reconstruct them.

Pedagogical practices not only construct subjectivities, but also produce knowledge, theory. The issue is how to articulate different partialities, different discourses, different voices, in the process of theory-making. Lugones and Spelman argue for a non-imperialistic theorizing process, one that rejects universal claims and reductionism. I would add, a theorizing process that takes place in other spaces besides the Academy and recognizes partialities and confronts their limits without excluding those being theorized. A pedagogy of difference generates knowledge in community to serve all those involved in it, as opposite to a production of knowledge by an elite to serve its own interests. Lugones and Spelman point out,

It is one thing for both me and you to observe you and come up with our different accounts of what you are doing; it is quite another for me to observe myself and others much like me culturally and in other ways and develop an account of myself and then use that account to give an account of you.⁶¹

The idea of a community building theory and producing knowledge disarticulates the hierarchy between theorists and doers and extends the process of inquiry, interpretation and contestation to those historically marginalized and excluded at different levels: Third World countries, women, blacks, students, gays, and others.

With respect to the particular production of knowledge in the classroom as a process of articulation and interpretation of the students' experiences, one of the main objectives of a feminist pedagogy of difference will be to make explicit the assumptions of the sociocultural context that provide a particular meaning to the multiplicity of the utterances in the dialogue. Reading and writing should be seen as productive activities through which meaning emerges and can be analyzed in the final texts the students produce. The general assumption underlying the previous statement is that the social uses of writing, the values implied, and the forms it takes all vary across historical time and cultural space. Therefore, reading and writing take on an ideological dimension that cannot be abstracted because through them students not only learn skills but have access to particularly defined cultural knowledge and social relationships.⁶²

In relation to the questions about Lugones's concept of "world" travelling, I would like to stress her concept of world as "a construction of life," either dominant or nondominant, as a constructions of relations of production, gender, and race. These worlds—a rejection of a unified one—are necessarily inhabited by people, either real or imaginary, dead or alive. This is a powerful concept in that it enables disclosure of how life may be represented in a multiplicity of ways which make sense to concrete people or not, in ways they understand or not, in ways they accept or not. Even more, Lugones says that by describing her sense of a "world," she means "to be offering a description of experience, something that is true to experience even if it is ontologically problematic."⁶³ This is really a woman asserting women's experiences in a powerful and meaningful theorizing process, much more than a mere celebration of experience.

From a pedagogical perspective, this concept of world as lived in the first person seems to me very important because it makes more visible the living multiplicity of voices, of representations, of experiences, that make people "world"-travellers. Traveling as a relational shift from having one subject-position to having a different one according to the world or worlds inhabited at the time, not only helps us to get to know and understand others but should be applied to do so. Even more, traveling is something that minority people do more of because of their marginalization, although it has to be done also by those in positions of domination albeit in a loving and playful way. Lugones opposes a conception of play as uncertainty, opened to surprise and self-construction, to an agonistic conception of play as competitive, conquering, and imperialistic. A pedagogy of difference encompasses from the outset ideas of "world"-travelling, love, and playfulness, as a means for recognizing and disentangling all those worlds women and other marginalized groups inhabit. This is a fundamental way to come to know how different they are in each world, to get to know others in their worlds, to reconstruct themselves and others in an emancipatory way, having in mind a visionary communal world of equity, solidarity, caring, freedom, and justice.

A pedagogy of difference requires that both men and women recognize that emancipation is not just freedom from power over us, but much more, freedom of our power over others. This suggests an ongoing and interactive process of contestation to concrete situations that legitimizes the expression of different voices differently.⁶⁴

Finally, the political project coming from this pedagogy of difference is one of democracy; but a conception of democracy that, in the light of the current limitations and reductionism to which the term has been subjected by conservative discourses, needs to be revised and reconstructed. It seems to me that a concept of radical democracy takes into account the richness and multiplicity of strands that are at play in a pedagogy of difference allowing them to come together in a common struggle. It is, then, toward radical democracy that a feminist pedagogy of difference might lead us.

The following chapter considers the task of analyzing current democracy theory, concentrating particularly on the discussion of fundamental categories necessary for the development of a more radical conceptualization in terms of the possibilities it offers for more egalitarian forms of life.