Education, Culture, and Society: Selected Works of Henry A. Giroux

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ABSTRACT: The article provides a thirty-year overview of the work of Henry A. Giroux, with a focus on American education, culture and youth. Giroux, a founding theorist of critical pedagogy in the United States, is committed to the belief that a return to civic participation is the sole means of curing what ails the current state of American democracy. In the selected works, Giroux addresses the corporate takeover of schools; the demonization of America's youth; the effects of the violence in the media; and the objectification of women by Hollywood. Rooted in the principles of social justice, fairness, and equality, Giroux embodies the Enlightenment's belief in improvement. The article emphasizes why Giroux is important reading for anyone concerned with the future of democracy in the United States and elsewhere.

RESUMÉ: Dans les trente années des travaux de Henry A. Giroux ici retracées, les études, la culture et la jeunesse aux Etats-Unis y sont mis en relief. Giroux, fondateur théoricien de la pédagogie critique aux Etats-Unis, est convaincu que le seul moyen de supprimer le mal de la situation actuelle dans la démocratie des Etats-Unis, est de revenir à la participation des citoyens. Dans certaines recherches, il aborde des sujets tels que l'emprise des entreprises sur l'école, la diabolisation de la jeunesse américaine, les conséquences que la violence décrite dans les média provoque, et le fait qu'Hollywood considère les femmes comme des objets. Imprégné des principes de justice sociale, d'équité et d'égalité, il incarne la croyance du mouvement du Siècle des lumières pour améliorer la situation. L'accent est mis sur le fait que toute personne est concernée par l'avenir de la démocratie aux Etats Unis et dans les autres pays, et devrait lire ce que Giroux a écrit.

Keywords: education, American culture and society, treatment and depiction of youth, democratic principles.

Introduction

Henry A. Giroux, professor of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, is indefatigable in his criticism of the modern and post-modern condition. Prior to his current position, Giroux held posts at Boston University, Miami University, and Pennsylvania State University. Born September 18, 1943 in Providence, Rhode Island, into a self-described, working-class background, Giroux believes that civic participation is the sole means of curing what ails the current state of American democracy. Giroux, a prolific essayist and thinker who has written over fifty books, sounds a battle cry without end. Reading his work recalls the iconic singer/songwriter Van Morrison's lyrics, "Rave On, John Donne...[R]ave on words on printed page" (1987). Giroux has been influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, James Baldwin, the Frankfurt school, British cultural studies, John Dewey, and William Pinar (Kincheloe, 2008 in Besley, 2012; Peters, 2011). In addition, he has been inspired by his friendships and collaboration with Joe Kincheloe, Richard Quantz, Stanley Aronowitz, Peter McLaren and Donaldo Macedo (Peters, 2011). The following is an overview of some of Giroux's preoccupations over the past three decades: education, culture, and American youth. In each sector, Giroux sees infinite opportunites for debate and, if necessary, organized resistance. The reasons for considering Giroux's output are many, not least of which is to illustrate why he remains a seminal voice in the call for democratic engagement, a primary goal of not only civics and social studies education (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), but of all pedagogy (Friere, 1996; Giroux, 2011). While placing primary emphasis on Giroux's appraisal of formal education structures, the paper considers informal education processes including the media's cultural and social influence, in addition to how America treats its children.

Education

Throughout his writings on education, Giroux asks pointed questions of whom and whose interest schools serve. Believing that all education is political, Giroux insists that as democratic citizens we are obliged to examine the insertion of stakeholders into the public sphere in order to reassert our authority (Giroux, 1986, 1996, 1999, 2002a, 2006, 2009, 2012a). Along with Michael Apple, Antonia Darder, Shirley Steinberg, and others, Giroux seeks to meld Paulo Freire's work with the social reproduction of Pierre Bourdieu, the democratic resistance of Stanley Aronowitz, and the Frankfurt School (Besley 2012). Giroux defines critical pedagogy as "an educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take reconstructive action" (Giroux, 2010). A leitmotif in Giroux's

work on education over the past twenty years is the increasingly popular practice of selling off public goods and services to the highest bidders (Giroux, 2012; Neave 2000). According to Giroux, American right-wing forces have been extremely adept at demonizing anything "public" while lionizing "private" entities (Ravitch, 2010, p. 313). Viewing the advent of neoliberalism, i.e., the elections of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as the reasons, Giroux delineates the callousness of selling off public goods and services to corporate and private interests, while simultaneously eliminating social programs that serve the public. Giroux (2012) sees the results as particularly calamitous in the American education sector where various groups conspire to remake the public system into for-profit ventures (p. 2). States now enthusiastically allow the creation of charter schools which are endorsed and bankrolled by the likes of Bill Gates, Eli Broad, and Sam Walton—what educational historian Diane Ravitch (2010) refers to as "The Billionaire Boys' Club" (p. 313). Giroux believes that the production of widely viewed films about public schooling like *Waiting for Superman* (2010) and *The Lottery* (2010) are effective marketing strategies that make the case for corporate interests to penetrate public schools by calls for: "privatization, downsizing, outsourcing, and union busting" (p. 17). Giroux makes note of the generous tax incentives, e.g., "New Markets Tax Credit" (passed under the Clinton administration) awarded for new charter-school construction, while observing that upon completion, the buildings are rented out to public school districts at exorbitant prices (p. 18).

The Obama administration's education policies under the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, inspire particular rebuke by Giroux. Stating that Obama's policies are perpetuating the Bush administration's obsession with draconian testing and measurement mandated by the 2002 implementation of "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), Giroux (2009) sees Obama's positions as consistent with conservatives' calls to make schooling solely for the purpose of teaching "work-related skills" (p. 258), thereby intoning neo-Marxism. While Giroux concedes that skills are indeed necessary for student success in the workplace, he takes issue with pedagogical practices —what Paulo Freire (1996) defined as the "banking approach" to education—that do not include critical thinking skills to prepare students for civic participation. Launched in the 1980s by those who perceive schools as a private right versus a public good, teachers, according to Giroux, must now deliver standardized content in order to administer an endless series of tests. Giroux views Obama's two-term tenure as a reiteration of the four previous administrations' attack on teachers (2012). By encouraging the corporate sector into schools, the resulting discourse is one that values hedge fund managers over teachers, privatization over the public good, management over leadership, and training over education. Giroux states that in order to oppose these anti-democratic tendencies, we must redefine and re-imagine teaching as a vital public service and schools as democratic public spheres (2012).

Giroux believes that teacher education programs can play a pivotal role in helping to restore the status of teaching. Chronicling the history of teacher education programs in the United States, Giroux and McLaren (1986) make clear that teaching institutions were originally created as institutions to inculcate routines of organization and subservience. They credit Harvard's Graduate School of Education Dean, Henry W. Holmes, with characterizing teachers as independent critical thinkers. Gradually, due to the intervention of John Dewey, teacher-education programs focused more on scholarship and the clinical aspects of teaching instead of the previous century's fixation on regimentation. Whether or not teachers should be afforded the status of intellectuals or of piecemeal workers continues to inform current educational debates while calls to transform education by "teacher-proofing" it have yielded little. Giroux & McLaren (1986) point out that while discussions of educational deficiencies rage on scant attention is paid to the role teacher education plays in encouraging civic participation. Citing educational literature which decries the state of education, the authors question whether or not the real (educational) crisis is in how long democracy can endure with so little support. Giroux and McLaren make a compelling case for re-designing teacher-education programs to portray teachers as "transformative intellectuals" (p. 214) whose role is to impart democratic ideals. The authors uncover the Right's rationale for reform while citing the degree to which teachers' authority and integrity is being undermined by measures taken for standardization and accountability via endless testing and test preparation. Giroux (2009) sees Obama's educational positions as antithetical to educational philosophers and practioners such as John Dewey, W.E.B. Dubois, and Horace Mann. By selecting Arne Duncan, the former CEO of Chicago Public Schools (2001-2009), as Secretary of Education, Obama, according to Giroux, found his surrogate. According to Giroux, President Obama's appointment of Duncan is no different from conservatives who have been inserting market-driven practices into K-12 and tertiary education for the past three decades. Obama and Duncan's endorsement of vouchers, charter schools, teacher merit pay, financial incentives for students, privatization, gutting teachers' unions, and endless testing mechanisms, are consistent with the Right's agenda (2009). Giroux makes note of the fact that when speaking to the U.S. Senate during his confirmation hearing, Duncan articulated his educational philosophy: "...to bridge the disconnect between the education and business communities" (p. 259). During his tenure as head of the Chicago school system, Duncan masterminded transforming several lower-income and minority schools into military academies, raising the question of whether or not they were institutions for recruitment. In addition, Duncan's harsh "zero tolerance" policies for minor student infractions culminated in a school-to-prison trajectory (Kroll, 2009, in Giroux 2009). In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Duncan—along with several voices from the Right—was quoted as saying, "The best

thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina" (Giroux, 2012, p. 49). Duncan and Obama's vision to implement the takeover of public schooling via charter schools in New Orleans was recently dealt a blow by a Louisiana District Court judge who ruled that the way in which the state currently finances its voucher program violates the state's constitution (Robertson, 2012, A15). Although the setback is probably temporary, Giroux (2012) might find comfort in the knowledge that there are those who share his views of Obama and Duncan's attacks on the public good—and on democracy itself—through their implementation of educational practices that employ "standardized curriculum, privatized education, charter schools, and high-stakes testing" (p. 69).

Giroux (2000, 2002, 2006, 2011) is no more sanguine about the current state of higher education in the United States and here again lays the blame upon the insertion of market forces into the tertiary sector. Due to severe budget cuts, universities not only allow easy access to corporations to fund research in the private sector's interest, but in some instances, business representatives sit on faculty committees that are designated to determine how funds are utilized (Giroux & Aronowitz, 2000, p. 333). At UC Berkeley, corporate interests amend or suppress research results that are inconsistent with their overall goals, i.e., profits (Cho, 1997, in Giroux & Aronowitz, 2000). As a result of increasing corporate intrusion into higher education, subject areas such as humanities—that do not realize measurable profits—are sidelined. Consequently, larger numbers of students and their parents ascribe to the notion that education is a training ground for the corporate sector. Giroux and Aronowitz (2000) lament the rise of "educational consultants" whose job it is to advise schools to act like corporations. A nomenclature has subsequently developed whereby "accountability" trumps constructs like social responsibility. Giroux (2000) sees the university becoming increasingly beholden to corporate concerns as a complete reversal of their founding ideals of justice, freedom, and equality, thereby echoing the sentiments of Richard Hofstadter (1963). Giroux and Aronowitz (2000) cite John Silber, the former president of Boston University, and his scorched-earth tactics of denying tenure to faculty members whose research did not align with his neo-con positions. (Giroux was denied tenure by Silber in 1992.)

According to Giroux (2002), the incursion of neoliberalism into the academy has had other corrosive effects including: the devaluation of faculty since departments' on and offline courses are currently staffed by 70% of part-time faculty to defray costs (Giroux, 2012b, p. 13); the student as consumer—whose primary interest is not in learning but in obtaining a degree to enter the labor market; and the widespread appropriation of corporate leaders as university heads (p. 438). Instead of imparting the values of intellectual achievement and civic responsibility, former CEOs are now repackaged as college presidents. Consequently, as higher education becomes more and more

subservient to market forces, it increasingly reflects them in its operational procedures (2002). According to Giroux (2002), this development has nullified pedagogy that inspires, i.e., educates students to question and challenge the pro-forma constructs of gender, class, race, and subordination (p. 441). Giroux (2002) perceives the corporate takeover of higher education as especially pernicious for lower-income and minority students. Many low-income students who manage to make it to college and pay spiraling tuition rates, are afterwards caught in a downward cycle of endless student-loan debt (currently estimated at 1 trillion dollars) with career options severely compromised since their primary mission is to find ways to pay off high-interest loans (p. 445). Citing the degree to which lower-class students cannot compete against higher education's middle and upper-class cultural capital (2011), Giroux deftly articulates the trend in higher education institutions across the country to enroll middle and upper-income students by providing tax credits and scholarships, e.g. the Hope Scholarship in Georgia, and others like it, which do not specify a parental income limit. In fact, increased college debt has caused millennial students from all economic classes to question whether or not a college education is worth the investment. Dale Stephens, 20 years-old, and the founder of "UnCollege", councils students to only attend top-tier schools—if they can get in—and then to go for one or two semesters (Epstein-Ojalvo, 2012). Stephens advises that accepted students should categorically use the "brand" of a highly selective school to their advantage. A product of popular culture's insistence that youth be co-modified, Stephens sees no need for students to interact with a community of scholars and peers beyond how the latter might be useful in achieving personal gain. The inherent cynicism and separatism in Stephen's message is further evidence of the consequences that Giroux delineates when corporate interests are allowed to dictate the functions of the higher education arena.

For those students who are intent on pursuing a college degree, Giroux (2002) characterizes the insertion of corporate brands and their effects, e.g. Barnes & Noble and Starbucks, into university life as another means of co-opting formerly public space and transmitting the student-as-consumer message (p. 446). In the world of "I consume therefore I am," (italics mine) students want entertainment and fun! In short, professors should amuse and not challenge or woe-unto-him or her when course evaluations are issued end-of-term. When everyone and everything is reduced to the "evaluative state" (Neave, 2000) customer satisfaction reigns and learning and participation become secondary objectives. The university cum full-service provider accounts for, among other things, minimal course requirements, grade inflation, and professors enrolling in stand-up comedy classes (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Giroux (2006) attributes the organized attacks on faculty and corporate invasion of higher education as a well-developed, five-decades-long strategy waged by conservatives to wrest the university away from what they perceived as its

liberal practioners. Orchestrated by, among others, William F. Buckley, members of conservative foundations, and the Nixon administration, its manifesto was penned by Lewis F. Powell, prior to his (1972) nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. The "Powell Memo" indicted American college campuses for housing intellectuals "who are unsympathetic to the [free] enterprise system" (p. 5). Powell successfully convinced university administrators to alter their hiring practices in the interest of creating a more "balanced" i.e., conservative, faculty and, according to Giroux (2006), to adhere to values consistent with the corporate structure. The case for the university's role in creating (and employing) conservative scholars was not only made but abundantly funded by Joseph Coors, Richard Mellon Scaife, John Olin, the Koch brothers, the Smith Richardson family, and Harry Bradley. The group's three billion dollar investment in the 1970s resulted in the formation of an array of conservative think tanks, institutes, and centers devoted to conservative ideologies both inside and outside academe.

In addition to providing focus to President George W. Bush's first term, the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, according to Giroux (2006), further facilitated the conservative assault on members of the faculty who were not supporters of either the corporate or security state (p.7). Bush fomented the Right's proclivities by conceiving of the post 9/11 world in Manichaean terms and stating "You're either with us or against us." The new millennium brought in a host of campus watch groups who sprung into action to monitor professors' statements and, if found objectionable, faculty remarks were posted and disseminated on and off-line. In addition, students made complaints to administrators and waged vehement protests. A triumvirate of McCarthy, Orwell, and Foucault-like tactics was realized to expose (and humiliate) faculty members who criticized—among other things—the Bush administration, Israeli policies toward Palestinians, and U.S. policies toward Arabs and Muslims (pp. 10-14). Giroux (2006) is avid when describing how these watchdog groups work to rid higher education of anything they perceive as "un-American" (p. 19), the result being the loss of informed debate since faculty—if they want to keep their jobs—are increasingly reluctant to broach controversial topics (Beineke, 2011) . Militant conservative students demand that their professors not editorialize but instead implore them to "Just give me my entrée and hold the homilies, please!" Giroux (2006) singles out student evaluations as being complicit in revealing professors' alleged liberal biases. In an introductory Foreign Relations class, a student opined in her course evaluation that, "This class was terrible! We were assigned 3 books, plus a course reader! ...[I] think the professor found out my religious and political beliefs and this is why he assigned so much reading" (p. 23). Here and elsewhere, Giroux lets the comments speak for themselves. However, he finds no humor when describing the numerous forms of surveillance now prevailing on college campuses. Throughout his narrative, Giroux repeats the sentiment "It gets worse" (2000, p.

333) as if he is in a perpetual state of shock at the course the United States has taken. Indeed, the relentless scrutiny of faculty in the postmodern era is consistent with Foucault's (1995) depiction of Jeremy Bentham's creation of the Panopticon, a watchtower with infinite powers of observation:

> The Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms. In this central tower, the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders: nurses, doctors, foremen, teachers, warders; he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose upon them the methods he thinks best; and it will even be possible to observe the director himself (p. 204).

Giroux judges the assault on higher education faculty as yet another means of dismantling what is perceived by the Right as the overreach of government, civil and environmental groups' gains, the separation between church and state, and the increased use of the industrial complex to wage wars without provocation. Most disconcerting to Giroux is the degree to which these initiatives have resulted in the current insular nature of the United States wherein the international community is rendered highly suspect. Giroux (2006) is at a loss to understand why there has not been more blowback from tertiary faculty in the face of measures to eliminate their authority, censor curriculum, eliminate tenure, and suppress efforts to engender civic participation and social responsibility in their students (p. 35). Giroux upbraids his colleagues for not defending free speech in the academy while reminding them that it is one of the few democratic forums that remain in America and elsewhere. The consequences of the university having gone over to the "dark side" are many—not least of which is the fact that civic discourse and civil disobedience have given way to students' quest for a consumer-oriented lifestyle. Hence, the goal of education is not to learn, not to think, not to question, but to acquire the positions necessary to maintain an acquisitive versus inquisitive life. Like Diane Ravitch, (2010) Giroux laments the neoliberal demonization of all things "public" including schools, transportation, and parks. In this worldview, anyone who disagrees with the tenets of capitalism (and its tendencies toward privatization) is perceived as a lunatic in need of help to understand the satisfactions of consumerism. While lamenting the fact that American higher education has succumbed to the demands of the marketplace and has thereby compromised democratic participation, Giroux is nonetheless intent upon the need to reverse the trend.

Culture and Youth

When discussing American culture and its far-reaching effects on youth, Giroux (1995, 1996) is forthright about the degree to which adults have abandoned their responsibility to engender democratic principles in the younger

generation. As a consequence, he senses an overall anomie among youth that is transmuted into an addiction to hand-held devices, consumerism, and instant gratification (2010). Echoing the sentiments of Neil Postman (1996), Giroux bemoans how the abundance of social media platforms have eradicated print media's demands for focus and reflection, the result being a collective attention deficit disorder that has neither the patience nor the interest in complexity (p. 17). Youth's dependence on technology underscores Giroux's (2001) selection of Lani Guinier's observation of today's individualized, isolated, youth: [with] "no sense of citizenry, no sense of community that is committed to a set of common values that they have to hold each other accountable to" (p. 301). Giroux exhorts public intellectuals to use new media to work across disciplines and to speak to an array of audiences (Giroux, 2011).

On the subject of how America treats its youth, Giroux (2002) conflates the wide-reaching security measures instituted after 9/11 with the "domestic terrorism" that children must now endure. Giroux cites the increase in child hunger, homelessness, lack of access to medical care, and the physical abuse that children suffer from adults. In short, youth now have fewer rights than almost any other group—and fewer institutions to protect them. Concerns about children are restricted to the private sphere, i.e., the family, which is highly problematic since parents work longer hours and therefore spend 40% less time with their children than they did 40 years ago (p. 292). In Giroux's mind, the threat America faces is not from terrorism, but from the battle to expand justice, freedom, and equality on behalf of all citizens—but especially young people who are becoming an "abandoned generation" (p. 290). Giroux is candid in his belief that an indication of how a nation holds democracy dear is reflected in meeting its responsibility to future generations. He outlines a grim spectrum for America's youth: as commodities or those who are headed into the ever-expanding penal system. He attributes the trajectory to the decline—since the 1980s—of a cohesive society and the disappearance of the institutions created to preserve children's welfare. Placing the onus on a right-wing agenda to gut public schools, colleges, and jobs-creation programs, Giroux views the phenomenon as much more pronounced among marginalized groups.

Over the past thirty years, Giroux has intricately analyzed the power of informal modes of education. Focusing on how females are faring in media representations, teenage girls' angst and isolation is the topic Giroux (2010) addresses in his thorough account of the Hollywood movie *Ghost World* (2001). In *Ghost World* (2001) Giroux provides an in-depth analysis of the teenage female characters' disdain for middle-class values or what an earlier generation described as "ticky tacky" lives. While agreeing that the film provides accurate portrayals of adolescent angst about entering an adult world void of meaning, Giroux chastises the filmmakers for not encouraging organized resistance or for addressing the economic conditions that have contributed to its main character's alienation. Consequently, the film sends the message that it is futile for youth to organize in order to address social, political, and economic problems. Giroux believes that *Ghost World* presents a personal narrative of resistance but that it

fails to provide insights on how individual problems are part of a larger social fabric (p. 302). The message that there are no alternatives for females to avoid society's repressive aspects (and that doing so results in further isolation) is a particularly bleak prognostication. Giroux (1996) takes issue with the violence perpetuated by Hollywood filmmakers while skewering the (former) Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole for condemning Hollywood's creation of films Dole considers "nightmares of depravity" (p. 62). Giroux considers Dole's remarks as pandering to Christian conservatives—especially since Dole had not seen the films he criticized. Giroux notes that Dole praised Arnold Schwarzenegger's grisly film "True Lies"—here again, without having seen it—as the kind of family entertainment that Hollywood should produce. Giroux agrees with the negative consequences of violence, but calls for recognition of what he deems as the other culprits: the National Rifle Association, talk radio, and the defunding of PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. Giroux concludes that conservatives strive to homogenize culture rather than to diversify it since funding the institutions that call for debate and dialogue to transform the power of media are not being provided adequate federal support.

In addition to being concerned with female objectification and gender equality (1995), Giroux is troubled by Hollywood's depiction of youth as dangerous and irresponsible. The widespread apprehension toward American youth was further articulated by the U.S. Supreme Court's 2002 ruling to uphold random drug testing of high school students (p. 287). Giroux (2010) offers Lawrence Grossberg's assessment of the current state-of-things in America whereby the treatment of America's children is—according to Grossberg—the categorical rejection of its future (p. 285). With approximately 20% of America's children living in poverty (the figure rises to 25% in cities and is 50% for minorities), more money being spent on prison construction than schools, and the highest infant mortality rate in the industrialized world, Giroux posits that how a culture comprehends the younger generation is portrayed by the media. Giroux (1995) holds special contempt for the Disney Corporation and its dissemination of films that cast women in submissive roles whose most noteworthy achievement is getting the guy at any cost—to themselves or others. Summarizing a plot point in the film *The Little Mermaid* (1989), whereby one female character comforts another for having lost her voice, the former consoles her by reminding her that men prefer women to be silent. The rewards of being mute are reinforced when the sought-after Prince kisses her, in spite of her never having uttered a sound (p. 81). Giroux sees the subordination of women as thematic in all Disney movies in addition to its degrading racial and ethnic depictions. However, while Giroux characterizes the Disney Corporation as an omnipotent purveyor of sexism, racism, and consumerism, he finds its prevalence to be a powerful opportunity for parents to interact with their children. He concedes that although you might not be able to slay the dragon, you might succeed in forcing it to heel. Giroux (1992) cites protest groups who were successful in curtailing anti-Arab depictions in the movie, *Aladdin,* and

civil rights' activists who were able to eliminate the "Aunt Jemima" depiction in Disney parks as proof of his convictions. Giroux believes in the power of demonstrations to transform both ideology and public policy—proof of his overriding optimism.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, Henry Giroux has encouraged American educators and citizens to do more to safeguard their democratic origins. His (2012b) optimism is most pronounced when describing the "Occupy Wall Street" movement which sought to protest the preferential treatment of financial institutions that were effectively able to steal other people's, "the 99 percent's" money without reprisal. Giroux sees the impetus for a return to the collective struggle of his youth to end the Vietnam war (p. 46). What he neglects to mention is that the previous struggle was primarily waged to protest the U.S. government's institution of the draft (Bachevich, 2008)—an unlikely reoccurrence (p. 152). Nonetheless, Giroux (2012b) is almost giddy when describing youth mobilization efforts across the United States and elsewhere; in these demonstrations, he sees enormous hope for restoring (and establishing) true democratic values. While Giroux has been critical of the alienating effects of spending too much time on Twitter and Facebook (2010), he sees their utility as being organizational tools and as agents of change (2011).

Trying to understand why there has been less outcry from American youth as elsewhere, Giroux (2012) is less convincing in his argument that Western European youth are more compelled to protest since they have more social protections, e.g. unions, a demarcation between public and private spheres, and less focus on the culture of celebrity (p. 41). Giroux holds France in particular esteem; however, French youth unemployment (ages 15–24) hovers at 20% (for those with a university degree) and is among the highest in the European Union (Langan, 2012, p. 41). Giroux (2012) is right to point out the degree to which Western European nation-states intervene to provide protections; however, young people in Europe are now subject to repeated periods of joblessness, underemployment, low-wage, part-time, temporary work, in spite of their participation in government-sponsored employment initiatives (Baldi, 2008). While youth unemployment rates in the EU are currently reported at 22.8 % versus a 16% youth unemployment rate the U.S., the latter does not consider the millions of American youth (under 25) who are unemployed, not enrolled in school, or in jobs-training programs—a phenomenon now known as "The Jobless Generation" (Gumbel, 2012, p.1). Thus the prospects for youth on both sides of the Atlantic are dire. Nonetheless, Giroux (2011) provides explicit remedies for America's current trajectory: the restoration of higher education as a public good; affording the protections of free speech in higher education and for America's youth; increasing hires of full-time faculty members; teaching students to be critical thinkers; and parental involvement. The goal of pedagogy, according to Giroux (2011), is "to educate people to be self-reflective, critical, and self-conscious about their relationship

with others and to know something about their relationship with the larger world" (p. 7). Consequently, pedagogy, according to Giroux, should compel people to become change agents in society. If only we would awaken from our collective slumber and take action. In short, Henry Giroux's output over the past three decades is a resounding and necessary plea for both formal and informal systems of education—and their audiences—to do a great deal better.

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