

The Culturalization of Class and the Occluding of Class Consciousness: The Knowledge Industry in/of Education

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Abstract

The Marxist concept of class is necessary in order to combat neo-liberal and neoconservative initiatives that work systematically to reduce education to an adjunct serving the interests of the capitalist class in extracting ever more profit for itself. The Marxist concept of class, because it connects inequitable social relations and explains them as both connected and rooted in the social relations of production, enables class consciousness and the knowledges necessary to replace capitalism with socialism. The Marxist concept of class, however, has been emptied of its explanatory power by theorists in the field of education as elsewhere who have converted it into a term that simply describes, and cannot explain the root causes of, strata of the population and the inequities among them. This essay critiques sample theorists in the field of education who have participated in the conversion of the Marxist concept of class to a descriptive term by culturalizing it - pluralizing it and cutting its connection to the social relations of exploitation that are central to capitalism. Such knowledge workers serve the interests of the capitalist class. The essay argues for the necessity of the Marxist concept of class, as well as of class consciousness, in combating and transforming capitalism into socialism.

Introduction: The Revisionist Left

The struggle over the end(s) of education has intensified as neo-liberal and neoconservative initiatives work systematically to reduce education to an adjunct serving the interests of the capitalist class in extracting ever more profit for itself.

As these initiatives increasingly displace education as an endeavor central to enabling both the free and full development of every individual and socially necessary societal development - development to meet the needs of people rather than the desires of the capitalist class for more profit for itself - it is urgently necessary to bring the Marxist concept of class back into educational theory, research, and practice. This is because it has the explanatory power to expose and analyze the structure of ownership and power in capitalist social relations. By capitalist social relations we mean the relations of exploitation between labor and capital that "condition," in the sense of placing limits on, "the general process of social, political, and intellectual life" (Marx, 1859/1989, pp. 20-21). (1) Because it can expose and analyze these relations that are at the core of social inequity, the Marxist concept of class can enable development of knowledge capable of pointing to ways of restructuring society so that public needs take priority over private profit.

The Marxist concept of class, however, is marginalized and trivialized by the revisionist left discourses that are dominant in education as elsewhere. By "revisionist left," we mean, following Rosa Luxemburg (1899/1970), those theorists who consider themselves to be "left" but who believe *there is no alternative to capitalism*, and thus do "not expect to see the contradictions of capitalism mature." Their theories consequently aim "to lessen, to attenuate, the capitalist contradictions" - in short, to "adjust" "the antagonism between capital and labor." As Luxemburg explained, the core aim of the revisionist left is the "bettering of the situation of the workers and. . . the conservation of the middle classes" (p. 60).

We support reforms and revisionist political and economic advances that seek to improve the lives of workers, for example, anti-capitalist as well as reformist campaigns and movements such as campaigns for tenants' rights, gender equality, race equality, and campaigns against SATS or the privatization of schools. But, it is crucial to note, we do so *from a critical position*. We believe, along with Marx and Engels

(1848/1985), that it is necessary to "fight for the attainment of the immediate aims. . . of the working class" (p. 119). For, as Marx argues, "by maturing the material conditions, and the combination on a social scale of the processes of production, [the fight for the attainment of immediate aims] matures the contradictions and antagonisms of the capitalist form of production, and thereby provides, along with the elements for the formation of a new society, the forces for exploding the old one" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 503; Marx explains this in chapters 8 & 9 of *Wage-Labour and Capital*, and chapter 15 of *Capital* volume 3).

Yet we also believe, again following Marx and Engels (1985), that it is necessary to "take up a critical position" in relation to reform movements, and to do so in order to educate the proletariat - that class comprised of all who do not own the means of production and are therefore compelled to sell their labor-power to survive - regarding "the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat" (p. 120). In doing so, we aim to provide knowledges that help enable (in relation to various sectional, local, and single-issue campaigns) the development of class consciousness - knowledge of capitalist social relations - and awareness of the need to transform capitalism into socialism.

In marginalizing and trivializing the Marxist concept of class, the revisionist left blocks critique of the practices of the capitalist class and their agents, and in turn, blocks the development of proletariat class consciousness. It gets rid of such "troublesome" concepts as "bourgeoisie," "proletariat," "social class," and "social totality." By social totality we mean society as a systemic entity operating on fundamental and knowable laws of motion (contradictory relations that cause change in capitalism and constitute the basis for its transformation) that are capable of explaining the connections among apparently autonomous practices and sites.

By substituting for these explanatory concepts the notions of, for example, relative autonomy and multiple and contingent classes and determinations, the revisionist left posits the social as an unknowable field of infinitely proliferating differences, one without cause or end. By manufacturing and disseminating this theory of the social and versions of it, the revisionist left produces subjects who cannot explain, without "any mystification and speculation," as Marx and Engels emphasize in *The German Ideology*, "the connection of the social and political structure with production"

(1965/1989, pp. 46-47). (Many subjects - for example, Blair's and Bush's professional ideologues - *do* "explain" the social and political as they connect to production - but with all kinds of mystification and speculation!)

In producing such knowledges and subjects, the revisionist left engages in managerial practices that register a profound and capitalist-class interested resistance to allowing the class politics of knowledge production to surface within the practices of knowledge production. To be specific: by erasing the binary concept of class, the revisionist left manages, seeks to amend, the capital-labor antagonism in capitalism. At the same time, by substituting for the Marxist concept of class an understanding of class as an effect of culture that has no relation to production, the revisionist left erases its own implication in producing knowledge central to the management, or the smoothing over, of binary class antagonism. The revisionist left, that is, "resists" laying bare the ways in which knowledge production is connected to capitalist production, and in doing so it serves the interests of the capitalist class. It also thereby preserves itself.

Through a critique of sample representative revisionist left theorists in education, this essay aims to open space for the development of class consciousness through the praxis of historical materialist critique. By this, we mean the praxis based on the Marxist theory of class that produces knowledges which are transformative because they make intelligible and explain the cause(s) of inequity, the existing property relations of capitalism that constitute capitalism itself. Understanding the Marxist theory of class and the knowledge it enables, is necessary if one is serious about establishing a society based on the principle "from each according to . . . ability, to each according to . . . needs" (Marx, 1891/1938, p. 10).

Marx: Class, Production, and Class Consciousness

Over the last several decades, the revisionist left has systematically discredited and displaced the Marxist concept of class, understood as a relationship of ownership to private property (means of production) (Hill, 1999; Hill, 2006; Hill and Cole, 2001; Kelsh, 2001; Rikowski, 2001; Zavarzadeh, 1995). As the revisionist left now uses class, the term "social class" refers to social divisions, social strata, that are effects of market forces that are understood to be (relatively) autonomous from production

practices, that is, from the social relations of capitalism that are the relations of exploitation between labor and capital.

However, the Marxist concept of class is deeply connected to the social relations of capitalism, the relations of exploitation between labor and capital that constitute the production practices of capitalism, and they are connected to them through the concept of *property*. Property, as Marx and Engels argued in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848/1967), is central to the concept of capital itself, and through this centrality, to production (p. 120). Under capitalism, property itself is what the worker does not have: "The proletariat is without property" (1848/1967, p. 92). As Marx explains extensively in *Grundrisse* (1858/1993, pp. 491-512; see also *Capital* volume I [1867/1967a] chapter 32), the inaugural moments of capitalism and its on-going development involve the "divorce between labour and property, between labour and the objective conditions of labour, everywhere" (p. 512). In *Capital* (1867/1967a), he argues that "The separation of labour from its product, of subjective labour-power from the objective conditions of labour, was therefore the real foundation in fact, and the starting-point of capitalist production" (p. 570).

For Marx, property involves not simply anything one possesses, but "the objective conditions of labour," "the means of labour" - "land and soil, raw material, necessaries of life, instruments of labour, money or all of these" (1858/1993, p. 503). The objective conditions of labor are "all such objects as are necessary for carrying on the labour-process." They include the "instruments of labour" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 180), and "an instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the labourer interposes between himself and the subject of his labour, and which serves as the conductor of his activity" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 179).

The objective conditions of labor, however, are not property, but mere possessions, becoming property only under certain, historically produced conditions where workers have no such objective conditions of labor, and are employed to use the objective conditions of labor owned by others. Those historically produced conditions are ones referred to earlier: the workers have been "divorced" from the objective conditions of labor. This makes them "free labourers, in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, etc., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case

of peasant-proprietors; they are, therefore, free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 714).

It is only when the possessor of the objective conditions of labor uses those conditions to exploit the "free" laborer for the production of surplus value that the objective conditions of labor constitute the understanding of property central to the Marxist concept of class. This is why Marx refers to the relations of production as "property relations" (e.g., 1859/1970, p. 21). Accordingly, Marx and Engels argue in *The German Ideology* that "Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the produce of the activity" (1965/1989, p. 53).

"Possessions," then, constitute "property" only when they are used to exploit for production of surplus value. It is because classical Marxism understands the concept of property in this way that it also understands there to be only two classes fundamental to capitalism, and why it understands both of them to be constituted at the level of production, and not at the levels of culture or politics.

Marx calls the relations between the two classes "property relations" or "relations of production," and he argues that it is these relations that provide the key to social analysis: "it is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production [i.e., the "means of production" - factories, agri-business, banks, finance houses, transport and communications industries] to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labor and thereby its social productivity - which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state" (1894/1967c, p. 791). The "hidden basis" of the social structure, in other words, is the relation between the two classes corresponding to a given state in the development of the productive forces, which include the means of production and labor-power.

"Capital" itself, then, and as Marx argues, "is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation" (1894/1967, p. 814).

Surplus value - profit - is the value produced by worker expenditure of labor-power on the means of production. It is the value determined, ultimately by capitalist class practices in their totality, to be above and beyond ("surplus") the value that the owner must pay in wages to the laborer to ensure she is able to reproduce her labor-power (*Capital* vol. 1 Part III, Chapter 7). "To extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labour-power to the greatest possible extent," Marx argues, is "the directing motive, the end and aim of capitalist production" (1867/1967a, p. 331). Marx calls the extraction of surplus-value from the worker "exploitation" because the capitalist uses the "freeness" of the worker for his own ends, production of profit.

Surplus-value arises out of the work done during that portion of the working-day Marx calls "surplus labour-time" because it is beyond that which the laborer must have to sustain himself. The labor completed during this part of the working day Marx calls "surplus-labour" which, he emphasizes, is crucial to understanding surplus-value. Surplus-value is "materialised surplus-labour" (1867/1967a, p. 217), and "is [the capitalist's] property; it has never belonged to anyone else" (1867/1967a, p. 586). Profit, in other words, is labor-power for which the laborer is not compensated.

Marx calls the production (property) relations - the relations of class - "antagonistic." The relations are "antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social conditions of life of the individuals" (Marx, 1859/1970, p. 21). Property relations are antagonistic because it is the labor-power of the workers that constitutes the very capital that is turned against the workers in the form of a power that leaves them no choice but to sell their labor-power again and again. "Property," as Marx explains, is "the worker's own objective conditions" that "arise over against him as autonomous forces, the property of someone else, value existing for itself and bringing everything back to itself - in short, capital" (Marx, 1995, p. 385). This "capital," Marx argues, is "value concentrated into a power" (Marx, 1995, p. 385), and it consists of the very labor-power of the workers "embezzled" from them, "because abstracted without return of an equivalent" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 611).

Class, conceptualized in the Marxist framework as a binary social division instituted at the point of production and fundamental to capitalist production, is therefore capable of explaining the cause(s) of inequity and difference at the level of production

that "condition. . . the general process of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx 1859/1989, pp. 20-21). Through historical materialist critique, the Marxist concept of class enables the development of reliable knowledge necessary to guide transformative social action.

Historical materialist critique grasps the "laws governing the production and exchange of the material means of subsistence in human society" (Engels, 1975, p. 170). In order to do so, it systematically and ruthlessly penetrates through the connections imagined and made at the level of culture and the market, laying bare all as rooted in the social relations of production. In this way, it enables class consciousness: consciousness of the property relations in which are forged all "differences" (values), consciousness which involves the knowledge that if inequity in any arena of the social is to be abolished, what must be abolished are the property relations which are the cause of all inequity. Abolishing property relations - abolishing class - involves the dialectical move whereby workers take back the means of production "embezzled" from them by the capitalist class.

In the place of the Marxist theory of class, the revisionist left has installed a Weberian-derived notion of class as a tool of classification useful only to describe strata of people, as they appear at the level of culture and in terms of status derived from various possessions, economic, political, or cultural. Use of such classifications can be useful in exposing differentials. But for what purpose is such exposure useful? That is, who benefits from it?

Such differentials, because they are not understood from the vantage point of a binary concept of class, are used to fracture the working class by promoting anger, envy, guilt and blame among its various fractions. What is masked from workers, because the capitalist class and its agents work to augment ideology in place of knowledge, is that some workers are poor *not* because other workers are wealthy, but because the capitalist class exploits *all* workers, and then divides and hierarchizes them, according capitalist class needs for extracting ever more surplus value (profit). However, as a tool of categorization, such a concept of class cannot provide reliable knowledge to guide transformative praxis. It can provide indications and motivations for reformist measures, such as social democratic redistributive expenditure and policy programmes, but these are limited in nature. Ultimately, as we explain, such

Weberian-derived classifications serve to occlude class consciousness and the class contradiction within Capital.

The revisionist left and the right, in other words, understand class not as an historically-produced, objective and antagonistic relation rooted in the relations of production in which people engage in order to produce their material life, but as an effect of cultural practices in relation to which individuals engage in an on-going process of identity formation.

For example, class in Paul Fussell's book *Class*, is understood in terms of what one buys, how one decorates one's house, and how one speaks. "According to these views," as Zavarzadeh (1995) explains, "the effective site of social change. . . is not 'class' but the incommensurate consuming 'identities' obtained in what Angela McRobbie calls the 'social relations of shopping' (34)" (p. 45). In this scenario, Zavarzadeh continues, "the proletariat is no longer the revolutionary vanguard but a 'shopper,' who daringly consumes objects such as cashmere sweaters forbidden for his consumption by the binary representation of bourgeois/ proletariat" (p. 46). But, he points out, "what separates people is not ownership of consumption items, but ownership of the means of production. The person who pays by food stamp and the worker who pays by his paycheck are in the same class of people: those who do not have access (not to the means of consumption) but to the means of production" (p. 44).

In such a framework, the actual material practices in which people engage to produce their material life are believed to have no bearing on consciousness. That is, the exploitative social relations of production in which all persons engage in order to provide themselves with food, clothing, shelter, education, and so forth, are thought to have no impact on the ideas people have. But as Marx and Engels (1969/1985) explain, "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (p. 47). With few exceptions, the revisionist left and the right concur that the market represents the consciousness of people, and that it is this consciousness that determines people's existence, and therefore all that is necessary to do in order to change the world is to change people's consciousness. The revisionist left, that is, now rejects what the right rejects, that "social existence . . . determines . . . consciousness," and affirms the idealism that

informs the right: that "consciousness. . . determines . . . existence" (Marx, 1989, p. 21).

As a consequence of *the culturalization of class*, the concept of false consciousness - by which we mean a consciousness arising from the attempt to "explain practice from the idea" ("class" as an effect of the market as "people's will") rather than explaining "the formation of ideas from material practice" ("people's will" as effect of class; Marx & Engels, 1965/1989, p. 58) - has been abandoned. So, too, has the concept of class consciousness, which involves developing the knowledge to explain how and why one's experiences as a proletariat (class) subject are shaped by material practice. Class consciousness, that is, involves knowledge of class as the relations of production. Insofar as the revisionist left has discarded this (binary) concept of class, it contributes to the blocking of class consciousness.

Weber: Class, the Cultural "Market," and False Consciousness

For both Weber and Marx, class determination involves property. However, each understands property in radically different terms. The two understandings of property not only generate different types and numbers of classes. They also open fundamentally opposing horizons of possibility for knowledge of "difference" and action based on that knowledge.

As we have argued, the concept of property is central to the classical Marxist concept of class. In the Marxist theory of class, through exploitation enabled by property ownership, owners live off the labor-power of workers: owners' source of income is not wages but profit, the expropriated labor-power of others. In the form of property understood as the means of production, owners possess the power both to command those who do not own, not only to labor, but also to agree to be unpaid for a portion of what they produce through their labor, and the power that they have to do so is material: it is the expropriated labor-power of the workers themselves.

In contrast to Marx's theory of class, Weber's does not involve one's relation to private property understood as capital. It is the case that Weber asserts that " 'property' and 'lack of property' are. . . the basic categories of all class situations" (1914/1968, p. 927). This is a division that makes Weber's theory of class appear to be able to explain

the cultural in relation to the "economic," and to involve property and labor in doing so. It is what allows "classical" Weberian theory and current reconstructions of it (whether they claim to be Weberian or not) to represent themselves as capable of explaining power and inequity in relation to the social relations of production, when in fact they occlude property relations and the exploitation they entail.

Indeed, Weberian-based understandings of the social, such as that used by prominent educational theorist Michael W. Apple, have the appearance of the "radical" because they use terms such as "class" and "the economic," and claim to be making arguments for social change that involve the "transformation" of capitalism.

Yet, they are revisionist, not "radical," because such theories of the social do not grasp things by the root, which is the meaning of "radical." In effect *if not by design*, Weberian-based formulations of class serve the interests of the capitalist class (this explains their prominence) insofar as they erase both the proletariat and the capitalist classes as antagonistic entities unified in the contradictory and exploitative social (property) relations of capitalist production. They thereby make invisible the root social (property) relation of capitalism so that it is not possible to question it in order to produce knowledge to change it.

Apple claims to be "deeply committed to social transformation" (2003, p. 17), but the "transformation" he speaks of is problematic. First, in actuality, it is quite limited. Second, it is, at the same time, a fantasy. He does not want to abolish the capitalist regime of wage-labour involving exploitation. He wants, for example, to "eliminate poverty through greater income parity" (2006, p. 68). Indeed, he argues not for transformation, but for a "politics of interruption" (2005, p. 392). This is a limited aim insofar as it leaves exploitation in place, capitalism unchallenged, and the repressive political and state forms of capital in control. It is also a fantasy because as Marx argued and as the world has seen, under capitalism, "accumulation of wealth at one pole is . . . accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 645). Empirical data (e.g., Dumenil and Levy, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Hill, 2006) shows only too nakedly the increasing national and global inequalities of wealth and the growth of poverty.

Greater income parity under Capital is an illusory fantasy, other than for particular strata of the working class.

Apple's understanding of class borrows a great deal from Weber. In order to explain this, it is necessary to unpack the Weberian understanding of class.

In opposition to Marx, Weber does not regard the "propertied" and "non-propertied" as classes. These are only what he calls the "basic categories of all class situations." And by "property," Weber means something very different from Marx's theorization of that concept. Moreover, for Weber, it is "'class situation'", which he equates with "'market situation'", that is the basis for "class."

"'Class situation,'" writes Weber, "means the typical probability of 1. procuring goods, 2. gaining a position in life and 3. finding inner satisfactions, a probability which derives from the relative control over goods and skills and from their income-producing uses within a given economic order" (1914/1968, p. 302). "'Class,'" for Weber, "means all persons in the same class situation" (p. 302). "'Class situation' and 'class,'" Weber summarizes, "refer only to the same (or similar) interests which an individual shares with others" (p. 302). "Always," Weber argues, "this is the generic connotation of the concept of class: that the kind of chance in the *market* is the decisive moment which presents a common condition for the individual's fate" (p. 928). Thus, Weber notes that "'class situation' is, in this sense, ultimately 'market situation'" (p. 928).

Weber substitutes market situation for the classical Marxist "position in the social relations of production" as that which determines class. For Weber the market is the arena where people meet "competitively . . . for the purpose of exchange" (1914/1968, p. 927) of "any object" "for money" (p. 82). They bring to the market a great variety of things. Those whom Weber would classify as members of "property classes" (p. 302) bring to the market "property" understood as that which is "usable for returns" (p. 928).

This is in contrast to Marx, who theorizes "property" as the means of production created by labor-power but appropriated by the capitalist class, who then uses those means to command labor-power to produce surplus value for the capitalist class.

However, Weber *pluralizes* property to mean any sort of possession, "large or small" (1914/1968, p. 928), for which one could receive a "return." Those whom Weber would classify as members of "commercial classes" bring to the market "services . . . differentiated just as much according to their kinds of services as according to the way in which they make use of these services, in a continuous or discontinuous relation to a recipient" (p. 928). While they are "typically *entrepreneurs*," these classes also include bankers, lawyers, physicians, artists, and "workers with monopolistic qualifications and skills . . . natural, or acquired" (p. 304).

In place of Marx's understanding of labor-power as a commodity that is a source of value, and a source of "more value than it has itself" (1867/1967a, p. 193), Weber substitutes services and skills that come in an infinite number of forms. In the Weberian framework, there are also "negatively privileged" property and commercial classes, which include the "unfree" and "'paupers'" in the former, and skilled to unskilled laborers in the latter. And, "In between are the various 'middle classes,'" some of whom are in commercial classes, but some of whom fall outside all categories, for example, peasants and officials (1914/1968, pp. 303-304).

Weber's pluralization of property into goods and skills generates a great many "property classes" and "commercial classes," each including positively and negatively privileged subsets. Weber merges the differentially based property and commercial classes into what he calls "social classes." These social classes are those generally used by researchers: "a) the working class as a whole. . . b) the petty bourgeoisie, c) the propertyless intelligentsia and specialists. . . d) the classes privileged through property and education" (1914/1968, p. 305). Each social class "makes up the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical" (p. 302). This does *not* mean that one can move among the social classes with ease. It means, rather, that Weber identifies "four major social classes" among which "social mobility is infrequent and difficult *but within which it is relatively common*" (Breen, 2001, p. 41; emphasis added).

Thus, "social class" in Weber is not an explanatory concept but a tool of classification used to manage the many different classes for purposes of description according to typical "life chances" as determined by "market situation."

Because it is "the kind of chance in the *market* [that] is the decisive moment which presents a common condition for the individual's fate" (1914/1968, p. 928) - in other words, because "'class situation' is . . . 'market situation'" (p. 928) - and because for Weber, the market is the space of "battle of man against man" (p. 93) in competitive exchange, classes are not in the Weberian framework constituted in production by relations of exploitation, but by relations at the level of culture among individuals. To Weber's thinking, class is not a matter of one's position in relation to private property understood as the means of production, which determines as Marx sees it whether one arrives on the market compelled to sell labor-power or capable of buying and exploiting it. Rather, class for Weber is an *effect* of the specific goods and skills people manage to exchange on the market.

Class conceptualized no further than produced at the level of the market, as Weber conceptualizes it, is only ever reformist because it is a theory of the social that manufactures subjects who perceive of themselves as individuals and act on the basis of individual (subjective) interests which, it must be emphasized, are constituted as such by the terms of the market.

Class understood as produced at the level of the market contributes to *false consciousness*. In order to unpack this, it is necessary to state what we mean by false consciousness, and to do this, we need to explain the Marxist concept of *ideology*.

By ideology, we mean the discourse that attempts to make sense of and develop a coherent way of understanding social existence by covering over the real contradictions under capitalism and re-presenting them, at the level of ideas, such that they have some descriptive value of a circumstance for the individual (Ebert, 1996, p. 8). Ideology is in essence false consciousness, an inverted understanding of cause and effect that itself arises from the inversions of capitalism involved in the contradiction between the forces and relations of production at capitalism's core: "the *real barrier of capitalist production*," Marx argues, "is *capital itself*. . . . The means - unconditional development of the productive forces of society - comes continually into conflict with the limited purpose, the self-expansion of the existing capital" (1894/1967c, p. 250). This "limited purpose" - production to increase the capital of those who own property rather than to meet the needs of all persons - is an "inversion" in the sense that it is the opposite of what is possible once the productive forces under capitalism have reached

such a high level of development: production to meet the needs of all. (2) The ideology of "merit," to take one example, serves to mask this real, material contradiction, at the same time as it enables individuals to attempt to make sense of why some people have and others do not.

As Marx explains with reference to the domination of living labor by capital, "this inverted relationship necessarily produces certain correspondingly inverted conceptions, a transposed consciousness which is further developed by the metamorphoses and modifications of the actual circulation process" (1894/1967c, p. 45). Marx opens *Capital* with a critique of an "inverted conception" arising from an "inverted relationship" involving capitalist contradiction through his analysis of the commodity. Through the social relations of production, he explains, commodities *are presented* to persons not as relations among persons buying and selling labor-power but between products; they are presented, in other words, as the inverse of what they actually are: "the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour" (1867/1967a, p. 72).

The "inverted conceptions" are ideological understandings which, as Jorge Larrain (1996) argues in a critique of Stuart Hall's various and limited conceptions of ideology, are "not the result of a conspiracy of the ruling class to deceive the dominated classes, nor. . . arbitrary invention{s} of consciousness." They are, rather, "spontaneous or elaborated discursive attempt[s] to deal with forms of oppression and contradictions which [are] unable to ascertain the true origin of these problems and therefore result. . . in the masking and reproduction of those very contradictions and forms of oppression" (p. 55).

Attempts to resolve in the theoretical imaginary those contradictions that have their basis in practice and cannot actually be eradicated until capitalism is transformed into communism result in what we are calling false consciousness. It is a "consciousness" that is cut off from the historical materialist theorization of production as determinate. In other words, it is cut off from the understanding of labor-power as the source of all power and therefore denies that historical agency - the agency that can transform a mode of production into another and with it the culture that is the expression of the mode of production - is always an issue of class and not any individual.

For the class conscious agency of the proletariat, whose basis for agency as a class is in fact its labor-power that becomes concentrated in the means of production, false consciousness substitutes (in this example) the agency of the individual or group on the labor market. In other words, the proletariat sees its agency only in terms of individual or group agency, and only in terms of what any individual or group can accomplish in the labor market. In contrast, the class conscious proletariat recognizes that its agency goes well beyond market agency, in fact, to abolishing the market as the place for the sale and purchase of labor-power. The limited "agency" of the market - a "market risk agency" - can only be one which results, through risks taken in relation to the labor market, in the securing of "more or less" resources at the level of the individual or group, rather than transformation of capitalism into socialism where the needs of the many take priority over profit for the few. It is because false consciousness, contained as it is to the level of the market and culture in general, is reformist, that any (re)articulation undertaken at that level (the market), without going beyond that level, in a dialectical move, to its own condition of possibility in production, is also reformist.

Class in the Field of Education: The Culturalization of Class and the example of Michael W. Apple (3)

Class for Apple is similarly an effect of the operations of the market. Apple notes that "markets provide [public institutions involving goods such as education and universal health care] in radically unequal ways, with class, gender, and especially race being extremely powerful markers of these inequalities" (2006, pp. 103-104; 2005, p. 386). For Apple, class, along with gender and race, are effects, "markers" of the inequitable operations of the market, as opposed to constituted in the relations of exploitation.

This is particularly clear in his use of the work of Basil Bernstein, for whom class is cultural, a formulation about which Apple notes that "I do not want to imply that this is necessarily wrong" (Apple, 1992, p. 135). Drawing on Bernstein's work, Apple substitutes "class formation" - by which he means, following Wright, "organized collectivities" or "groups" that have some level of class consciousness about themselves as a class (1992, pp. 136-137) - for class as "a set of relations that have an existence outside of our minds," by which he means the Marxist concept of class (1992, p.130).

In other words, as Farahmandpur (2004) notes, "Apple conflates class with class consciousness. In contrast to *class* that stands out as an objective force, which is largely determined by an individual's position within the social relations of production, class consciousness is socially constructed by an individual's race, gender, and culture."

About these "class formations," Apple notes that they are formed by "labor market segmentation, unionization, party formation, legal and governmental practices, the development of social movements, the historical relationship among class, race, and gender antagonisms, alliances, and struggles, and so forth" (1992, p. 137). In short, he repeatedly cautions against forgetting class as central to capitalism as a "massive structuring force" (1992, p. 130; see also, for example, 1993, p. 177). Yet class for Apple is nevertheless, in his actual practices, an effect of the market, determined not by relation to property, but by relations within culture.

That class for Apple is an *effect* of the market is also abundantly evident in his use of Weberian terminology. An examination of a range of Apple's texts reveals that throughout, he discusses class in descriptive, Weberian terms: "middle-class"; "working-class"; "skilled workers" (1986); "working-class"; "lower-middle-class"; "new middle class" (1993); "managerial and professional middle class"; "poor and working-class" (2006). When he uses the term "socioeconomic status (SES)" - as when he writes that "Rather than giving large numbers of students who are working class, poor, or of color the ability to exit, it is largely higher SES families who exit from public schools and schools with mixed populations" (2006, p. 66) - he quietly acknowledges that his use of "class" is merely descriptive. In fact, at the 2005 AERA convention in Montreal, Apple explicitly rejected the binary understanding of class informing all of Marx's works, stating that "that doesn't work anymore" (Kelsh & Hill, notes, April 14, 2005).

In using a Weberian theory of class, Apple works, in effect if not in intent, against the interests of the proletariat by blocking its ability to see itself as a class, and furthermore, as a class in relation to the capitalist class. Weberian theory closes all space to conceptualize the proletariat as a class. The proletariat simply does not exist in Weberian class theory. This is not to say there are no workers in Weberian theory. It is to say that in the Weberian understanding of class all workers do not constitute a

class - and neither do all property owners. It is telling that Apple does not use terms such as "proletariat," which would include all of the SES classes he uses, nor do we see him use the concept of the capitalist class. Instead, Apple substitutes terms such as "dominant groups and classes" (1982, p. 29), and "dominant economic elites" (2006, p. 30).

Such Weberian-derived classifications have a number of impacts. First, they hide the capitalist class. For example, in the UK, the Registrar-General's / Office of Population Census and Statistics official categorisations of social class in the UK are as follows: the highest status class, "Class 1," the "Higher Managerial and Professional Class," includes "employers of more than 25 staff, and senior managers (e.g., plumber, carpenter, dressmaker who employs more than 25)." The "Higher professional" group includes "doctors, dentists, lawyers, university teachers." Together these account for 11% of the British population. There is no separate category of capitalists, the owners of the means of production. They are lumped together with "higher professional" workers (Office, 2000).

Second, Weberian-derived classifications segment the commonality and objective unity of the working class. These distinctions of layer, or strata, serve to politically fragment the working class and its sense of solidarity, of social and political cohesion. It also presents a picture of a fragmented working class with divergent interests. Classification substituted for class thus works to fragment working class solidarity, class consciousness, a class-based political project aimed at replacing capitalism by socialism, and a political organisation aimed at achieving that project. For if there is *not* an objective working class, Marx's historical materialist analysis of society is erroneous, and the working class no longer would have its historic mission to bury and replace capitalism with socialism.

Weber was, and still is, a very effective professional ideologue for the capitalist class. And, in effect if not in intent, so is Apple. By effectively disappearing, hiding, disguising, the exploitation of all those who do not own the means of production by those who do, he serves to block the development of the connection between culture and production practices. He therefore, again, in effect if not in intent, blocks the development of class consciousness. The apparent differentiation of the proletariat at the level of culture is the effect of the mediation of labor-power that has a material

basis in the divorce of labor from capital (property) in capitalism. But Apple erases that material basis, making "differences" appear to be free-floating, severed from material cause.

Apple's use of class as a descriptive term of classification does not and cannot capture *relations*, including the *relations of production, property relations*. That Apple uses a framework that cannot capture relations contradicts an important argument he himself has consistently put forth at least since 1979 (*Ideology and Curriculum*). He argues that "in opposition to the atomistic assumptions that predominate in our commonsense thought," it is necessary to see things "relationally". . . . First, any subject matter under investigation must be seen in relation to its historical roots - how it evolved, from what conditions it arose, etc. - and its latent contradictions and tendencies in the future. . . . Second, anything being examined is defined not only by its obvious characteristics, but by its less overt ties to other factors. It *is* these ties or relationships that make the subject what it is and give it its primary meanings" (1979, p. 132). The theory of class used by Apple contradicts both of the principles he puts forth here regarding the use of critical theory "*used critically*" (1979, p. 130, original emphasis).

Apple contradicts himself on his first principle by using a theory of class that severs class from its root material cause in the property relations of capitalism. In Apple's understanding of class, differences are not determined by position in the social relations of production, but are determined by culture through its operations on and in the market. This is cultural reductionism.

Apple repeatedly rejects "both the class and economic reductionism of the left" (1986, p. 198; see also 2006, p. 30). He does so ostensibly because he opposes the presumably one-sided analyses that it produces, as he indicates when he argues that the cultural and the economic "must be integrated to fully explain the roles schools play in the cultural and economic reproduction of class relations" (1979, p. 130). However, we see in his practice of cultural reductionism that he does not oppose "reduction" itself, but rather only the reduction that aims to enable the development of revolutionary class consciousness. This reveals the capitalist-class interestedness of his practices.

Apple contradicts himself on his second principle because in the merely descriptive and cultural understanding of class that he advances, the fact that one person "has" and others "have not" are causally unrelated "[market] situations." In the Weberian understanding of class that Apple uses, there is no fundamental relation between the fact that Bill Gates has a billion dollars while those who produce microchips for Microsoft have only enough income on which to survive. What is hidden from view in Apple's own uncritical use of critical theory is that Bill Gates is a billionaire *because* so many workers are exploited.

Apple, like Weber, displaces property and labor-power from production into culture, pluralizing and dehistoricizing both, and severing class from production. This makes class membership unstable, shifting, and fundamentally unknowable, and simultaneously cuts the oppositional and antagonistic relation between classes in Marxist theory. It is because of the different determinants of class situation - property, skill, or a combination of both - that any Weberian-based theory of class is said to be "multidimensional." It is precisely this "multidimensionality" that *occludes* the clear conceptualization of the binary class division of society, the grasping of the dialectical laws of motion of which not only explains why proletariat revolution is both possible and necessary but also enables the production of the reliable knowledge - knowledge rooted in the material practices of people rather than their ideas about themselves - which provides the basis for the principled politics necessary to engage in revolutionary praxis in order to replace capitalism with socialism.

Pluralization of property in Weber could be infinite, and infinitely open to revision, and so, too, could the number of property and commercial classes included in the categories of social classes. It is this (Weberian) framework, where property is pluralized and displaced onto culture, that manufactures "class" as a concept that is regarded to be - and in its Weberian manifestations actually is - "murky" (Lubienski, 2003, p. 32; Nealon & Giroux, 2003, p. 180). However, class is *reproduced* as "murky" by the practices of researchers, theorists, and educators who promulgate a Weberian-based theory of class. These are - in effect if not by design - capitalist-class interested practices because in blocking access to knowledges that enable class consciousness, they enable the reproduction of a system that privileges profit over the needs of people.

In Apple's Weberian-based understanding of class, the ambiguity regarding the basis of any class situation erases the objective fact that all those who "freely" agree to subject themselves to the "chances" they might have on the market are in reality compelled to do so by the power of the bourgeoisie. This power consists, it is necessary to repeat, on the bourgeoisie's private ownership of the means of production, or, to put it another way, on the theft of labor-power of the proletariat.

By disappearing into the "market situation" the category of being compelled to sell labor-power, Apple's works disappear having to sell labor-power as that which articulates the proletariat as a single class, no matter how highly differentiated workers appear to be on the market, or how many classes or social movements are articulated into a coalition at the level of culture. Disappearing the category of being compelled to sell labor-power removes from the theoretical imaginary the basis for the possibility and necessity of an international proletarian movement.

Above all, the power of the proletariat to abolish class society, which resides in the fact that the proletariat is the class of producers, is hidden and replaced by power understood as "the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (1914/1968, p. 926). In Weberian theory, power is not determined by the social relations of production; power is not the materiality of proletariat labor-power turned against the class from which it was appropriated by the bourgeoisie. Class and power are understood, rather, as the outcome of cultural practices. From within the terms of Weberian theory, it is not possible to question the regime of wage-labor in order to produce knowledge to change it.

Race, Class, and Gender: The Triptych Theory of the Social

Apple repeatedly argues that oppositions in culture - such as those involving race and gender - cannot be "reduced to the automatic workings out of simple formulas. We need a much more nuanced and complex picture of class relations and class projects to understand what is happening" in relation to "racial dynamics" as well as those involving gender (2006, p. 116; 2005, p. 392). In this, Apple presupposes that the Marxist theory of class cannot address differences such as those of race and gender - essentially, that it can address only the "economic." Here, Apple misrepresents

Marxism as a theory that, in the words of Stuart Hall whose work Apple draws on, "did not talk about or seem to understand . . . culture, ideology, language, the symbolic" (Hall, 1992, p. 279). But Marxism does, and it did, as Engels makes clear:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. - forms of law - and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (i.e., of things and events whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. (Engels, Letter to Joseph Bloch [1890]; in Selsam & Martel, 1987, pp. 205-206)

Apple valorizes those who "see that capitalism is not only an economic system but a cultural system as well" (1992, p. 128). Such a valorization, however, is simply symptomatic of Apple's collapse of the "economic" as the *ultimately* determining element into the "economic" as the *only* determining element, a formulation that Engels refutes. Yet, in Apple's framework, it is necessary to collapse these two in order to manufacture and disseminate a vulgar form of Marxism against which Apple can launch his own formulations.

Having distorted classical Marxist theory, Apple argues for a "relative autonomy" model of the social, in which "cultural forms and practices . . . have their own politics" that, while "related to and limited by class relations and the economy," "have something of a life of their own and provide important grounding for action that may not simply reproduce existing relations of domination and exploitation" (1986, p. 22). In this theory of the social - in which class, it is necessary to recall, has actually been made a cultural form and severed from class at the level of production - there are, in Apple's most recent formulation, "a multitude of intersecting and contradictory dynamics including not only class but race and gender as well" (2006, p. 67). We refer

to this as a "triptych" formulation, following McLaren and Scatamburlo d'Annibale's (2004) critique of this formulation:

Race, class and gender, while they invariably intersect and interact, are not co-primary. This "triplet" approximates what the "philosophers might call a category mistake." On the surface the triplet may be convincing - some people are oppressed because of their race, others as a result of their gender, yet others because of their class - but this "is grossly misleading" for it is not that "some individuals manifest certain characteristics known as 'class' which then results in their oppression; on the contrary, to be a member of a social class just *is* to be oppressed" and in this regard class is "a wholly social category" (Eagleton, 1998, p. 289). Furthermore, even though "class" is usually invoked as part of the aforementioned and much vaunted triptych, it is usually gutted of its practical, social dimension or treated solely as a cultural phenomenon - as just another form of "difference." In these instances, class is transformed from an economic and, indeed, social category to an exclusively cultural or discursive one or one in which class merely signifies a "subject position." (p. 186)

But, what is this "life of their own" that Apple claims the politics of cultural forms and practices have, and where does it come from? As we will argue, this "life" privileges experiential knowledge over theoretical knowledge, and in particular, classical Marxist theory.

Apple articulates his overriding program as follows:

the problem is not only how we might fruitfully examine both class and gender together, but also how we combine structuralist insights about the relationship between the school and the social and sexual division of labor with a culturalist perspective that places human agency and the concrete experiences of people at the center. (1986, p. 23)

While Apple (1982) believes that local analyses need to be set "within a larger framework of class and ideological and material forces, forces that set limits on, and actually help produce, the meanings and practices one finds," he also believes that what makes any work "significant to an investigation of schooling and reproduction is the clearly articulated focus on class not as an abstract category but instead as a lived experience" (p. 117). The politics of cultural forms and practices, then, are grounded in experience, which Apple frames as containing a "truth" beyond the explanatory reach of class as relation to property in a system of production.

What this does, however, is posit experience, as Young (2006) has argued in a critique of Patricia Hill Collins' work, as "the limit text of the real" (p. 2). Young explains why this is problematic:

experience is a highly mediated frame of understanding. Though it is true that a person of color experiences oppression, this experience is not self-explanatory and, therefore, it needs to be situated in relation to other social practices. Experience seems local but it is, like all cultural and political practices, interrelated to other practices and experiences. Thus its explanation come from its "outside." Theory, specifically Marxist theory, provides an explanation of this outside by reading the meaning of all experiences as determined by the economic realities of class. (p. 2)

Similarly, Gimenez (2001) has argued that while experience is "illuminating" because it gives us access to "how people describe their understanding of their lives,"

Experience in itself, however, is suspect because, dialectically, it is a unity of opposites; it is, at the same time, unique, personal, insightful and revealing and, at the same time, thoroughly social, partial, mystifying, itself the product of historical forces about which individuals may know little or nothing about. (p. 30)

In other words, experience is not the limit text of the truth, because it is a description, and "description. . . no matter how thorough, has meaning only within a specific theoretical context" (Gimenez, 2001, p. 29). And the theories that people have to understand experience, even to frame the description of experience, are heavily mediated by the interests of the capitalist class, which privileges those theories that accord with its aim: more profit for itself. In other words, theory that is "out there" to use to frame or explain experience is *put* "out there" by the capitalist class.

Apple knows this. He himself writes that "Grasping what [current developments in the marketization of the world] means is made harder in daily life for all of us because of the dominant forms of interpretation that are now made available or *not* made easily available in education and in the media" (2006, p. 16).

What Apple wants to get at by examining experience is "possibilities that exist for altering dominant relations" (1986, p. 24). However, this is a *limited program*. It can only result in small changes at local sites, changes that, because they take place within the framework of capitalism, can succeed only in securing gains that (a) take away

from the resources of another group at another site, given the limited resources the capitalist class allots to and divides among the proletariat; or (b) can easily be taken away in another local struggle where the group who serves the interests of the capitalist class are advantaged in some way or another. Moreover, it conveniently forgets that these "possibilities" are likely those formulated out of theories that the capitalist class has put out there. Still, Apple valorizes the experiential and in doing so, serves the interests of the capitalist class.

Apple's triptych formulation aligns with that of Anderson and Collins' (1998) formulation of the "matrix of domination" that understands "race, class, and gender as different but interrelated axes of social structure" (p. 3). In this widely accepted and used framework, race, class, and gender are understood as "interlocking categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life; thus, they simultaneously structure the experiences of all people in this society. At any moment, race, class, or gender may feel more salient or meaningful in a given person's life, but they are overlapping and cumulative in their effect on people's experience" (p. 3).

Gimenez (2001) refers to this as the theory of *intersectionality*: "an account of the multiplicity of locations effecting individuals [sic] experiences, or as a study of the patterned variations in the identities individuals claim for themselves regardless of those locations." She critiques it because it "cannot explain either the sources of inequalities or their reproduction over time" (p. 29). Insofar as Apple posits a triptych formulation, his framework has the same limit.

Furthermore, though, the triptych framework undermines itself. As Young argues in his critique of Collins,

If race, class, gender, and the accompanying ideological apparatuses are interlocking systems of oppression, as Collins suggests, then the experiential is not the site for the "true" but rather the site for the articulation of dominant ideology. On what basis, then, could the experiential provide grounds for an historical understanding of the structures that make experience itself possible as experience? (2006, p. 2)

The triptych framework Apple currently uses, in which "it is from the experience of attempting to create a new, more democratic politics of school life that we can learn what is possible" (1993, p. 41), ignores that such experiences are ideological in the

sense, as explained above, that ideology involves an attempt to make sense of cultural contradictions rooted in the relations of exploitation by covering them over and re-narrating them in terms of some "differences" that, while the differences appear at the level of culture to be natural, are not, but rather socially constructed. This is the place to say that social differences are, by ideology, naturalized as inevitable, rather than interrogated and critiqued as socially constructed (Ebert, 1996, p. 8).

It is important to note that Apple's (and Collins') triptych formulation of race, class, and gender does not enable understanding of the relations between these three formations. In the triptych formulation, they are unified only at the level of experience, and even there each may not be acknowledged. In contrast, the Marxist theory of class does provide an integrated and transformative understanding of the three.

In the Marxist theory of the social, as opposed to that of the revisionist left, individual differences and differences within individuals are valorized under capitalism only to be curtailed by being pressed into the service of "the specific end and aim, the sum and substance, of capitalist production": "the production of surplus-value [profit]" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 298). Individual differences are not under capitalism brought out so as to allow human capacities to be developed for their own sake and for the benefit of all, but in order to be shaped so that they can be used to enrich the capitalist class by being developed as labor-power. As Marx and Engels argued, "differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex" (1848/1985, p. 88).

In other words, the core opposition between labor and capital that structures all production practices is used by the capitalist class for one purpose: "production of surplus-value [profit]," which as Marx explains is "the absolute law" of the capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 618). The capitalist class, in its quest for ever more surplus-value, seizes upon any opposition that, owing to historical developments preceding or within capitalism, enables the production of more surplus-value. As Marx argues, the "division of labour seizes upon, not only the economic, but every other sphere of society and everywhere lays the foundation of that all engrossing system of specializing and sorting men" (1867/1967a, p. 354). These

socially constructed and ideologically naturalized and enforced oppositions - those involved in race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and so forth - are folded in to the core opposition of labor and capital. In *Capital* volume 1, in the chapter on "The Working Day," Marx in fact shows how and explains why gender and age were folded into class.

This is to say that, in capitalism, race *is* class, gender *is* class, ability *is* class. This is *not* to argue that race, gender, ability, and so forth are not heavily mediated by cultural practices informed by ideology. They are. And those cultural practices informed by ideology have devastating effects on individuals and social groups. As McLaren and Scatamburlo d'Annibale (2004) have argued, "An historical materialist approach ...acknowledges the 'material' force of ideologies - particularly racist ideologies." However, as they go on to explain, such an approach acknowledges ideologies also as forces that "assign separate cultural and/or biological essences to different segments of the population which, in turn, serve to reinforce and rationalize existing relations of power" (p. 186).

In other words, cultural practices informed by ideology enable the reproduction of race, gender, ability, and so forth *as* class. From the vantage point of classical Marxism, then, Apple, in his separation of race, gender, and class into separate "dynamics" does not serve the interests of the proletariat as a whole, and in fact, works to shore up ideological understandings that reproduce inequity.

Marxism does not valorize the proliferation of differences said to be actually existing, since to do so would be to contribute to the reduction of persons to "instruments of labour." Rather, through ideology critique Marxism produces revolutionary knowledges which are capable of explaining and transforming the exploitative social relations of wage labor. These relations require that some qualities be ideologically apprehended as constituting identities - age, sexuality, gender. . . - in order to supply the differences which can be hierarchized into strata in the workforce and then used to explain away the hierarchization as "naturally" following from (naturalized) difference.

The Knowledge Industry in/of Education: Professional Ideologues and the Dismissal of the Vanguard

What the dominant ideology needs most to secure in order to reproduce the social relations of production in capitalism is the subject who understands herself to be "free" and therefore understands the sale of her own labor-power on the market to be the practice of freedom rather than the effect of "the dull compulsion of economic relations" (Marx, 1867/1967a, p. 737). All knowledges which attempt to inculcate the subject as "free" must involve a double move: the cause of all inequity - the fact that the binary class relations of exploitation emerge from the historical development of private ownership of what is socially produced, specifically, the means of production - must be occluded, and a cultural space must be opened in which the individual or group has agency, and therefore believes he or she is free within the given mode of production and that knowledge of class is therefore no longer necessary. This is a tactic used by the knowledge industry. Morton (1990) has theorized it as the practice of "set[ting] the limits of the horizon surveyed in such a way as to occlude the 'troublesome,' while claiming to open up issues to the full spectrum of 'reasonable' views" (p. 57).

Apple, in using a Weberian-based theory of class, and other writers such as Allman (for a critique, see Kelsh, 2006), in rejecting the centrality of property to the concept of class, both engage in this practice of opening up issues to the full spectrum of "reasonable" views: a wide variety of classes. They disappear the "troublesome": class as that which is determined by the social (property) relations of production. In this way, they open a space for individual or group agency.

Apple in particular, by pluralizing the Marxist concept of property from the vantage point of "market situation," makes it possible for everyone to be an "owner" of something and have a degree of power and therefore agency or "freedom." His Weberian-based theory of class, that is, is deployed both as an alibi to explain away inequitable access to resources (rather than to explain the cause of it), and as that which opens the space for the agency of the subject: one can, by apprehending the social from the vantage point of the market, believe that the exercise of agency consists in the rational calculation of the most effective means to realize the life chances allowed by the market situation. Because this is a "freedom" which masks

that persons who do not own the means of production are compelled to sell their labor-power, it is a "freedom" which protects the regime of wage-labor from question.

As we will explain, a Weberian-based theory of class, such as that used by Michael W. Apple, does not contradict the interests of the capitalist class because such a theory of class can ultimately be used to reproduce a "liberal" view of the subject as "free man" who "is the cause, and not the effect, of social meanings" (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991, p.1).

The understanding of class underpinning Apple's works, in which everyone is regarded as an "owner" of something or other and can imagine based on that ownership of "possessions" that she has a degree of power and therefore agency or "freedom," aligns with the Bush Administration's theme of the "Ownership Society," the "unifying theme on domestic policy as put forth in President Bush's [Second] Inaugural Address" (Rosenbaum, p. 20). It is also in alignment with themes Margaret Thatcher has often used, as, for example, when she argued that "Private ownership - of companies, of homes, of property of every kind - goes far deeper than mere efficiency. All of us in politics have dreams. It is part of mine to give power and responsibility back to people, to restore to individuals and families the sense and feeling of independence. The great reform of the last century was to make more and more people voters. The great reform of our time is to make more and more people owners" (Thatcher, 1986).

As explained in the USA in the *Economic Report of the President* (2005), "When used in economics, the term resource refers not just to natural resources, such as land or clean air, but to anything of value, such as skills. A property right refers broadly to the arrangements society uses to assign people control over resources" (p. 118). As in the Weberian understanding of class, "property" in the understanding of the Bush Administration refers to any tangible or intangible entity an individual can be said to possess and bring to the "market." As explained in the "Overview" of the Economic Report, "Property rights have a variety of names, including deeds, titles, permits, vouchers, allowances, or accounts" ("Overview"). Thus in the framework of the Ownership Society, "property" includes homes, health savings accounts, social security savings accounts (Office of the Press Secretary, 2004), and school vouchers (Rosen, 2005).

On the basis of this very broad and Weberian-based understanding of property, David Boaz, executive vice president of The Cato Institute, claims that "increasing numbers of Americans are becoming capitalists - people who own a share of productive businesses through stocks or mutual funds" (n.d., para. 6). Yes, notes Robert Reich, "It's true that more than half of American households now own stocks in corporations. But for most, it's just a few thousand dollars worth. And the total value of their current portfolio is less than they invested" (2004, para. 4).

However, all these people are not capitalists insofar as the "property" they own does *not* enable them to live off the labor-power of others, and does *not*, for example, enable them to incorporate in a country where labor-power is cheaper and command that labor-power in the interest of appropriating ever more surplus-value. Instead, most live in fear of losing health care, seeing their retirement accounts wiped out, or watching as a chief executive engages in such risky (market) behavior (for the purpose of more profit for the few) that thousands of dollars invested in stocks evaporate. It is the ability to critique the bourgeois class interests of notions such as the "Ownership Society" that is lost when the concept of property is either erased, as it is in Allman (for a critique, see Kelsh, 2006), or pluralized, as it is in Apple.

Indeed, Apple's works in particular not only removes the capitalist class from view, but provide alibis for the capitalist class. He describes what he calls the "professional and managerial new middle class" (2006; see also 1992, pp. 134-136, 140-142):

This fraction of the professional new middle class gains its own mobility within the state and within the economy based on the use of technical expertise. These are people with backgrounds in management and efficiency techniques who provide the technical and 'professional' support for accountability, measurement, 'product control,' and assessment that is required by the proponents of neo-liberal politics of marketization and neoconservative policies of tighter central control in education. (2006, p. 48)

By advancing an understanding of class in which there is no capitalist class, Apple takes the focus off of the capitalist class and puts it on this class fraction. An example of the way this alibi for the capitalist class becomes taken up is evident in the "Manifesto" of the students occupying the Sussex University Library:

We are here because the standards at Sussex University are falling. We believe that the recent cuts to the library epitomize the problems facing students at this university. We believe that we are entitled to a high level of education and that large seminars and few resources, either academic or material, are not going to achieve this. We regret that this action may inconvenience library staff and we stress that this action is in opposition to the library cutbacks and redundancies perpetrated by university senior management. We demand more transparency from the university and that it calls an emergency council meeting, open to all students, during term. We want to show the university the extent and level of discontent among students and we wish to show our complete support for the aims of the sortUSout campaign [the general campaign against the cuts at the Uni of Sussex], as well as the staff in all their industrial action. . . . From Bogota to Paris, our struggle at Sussex University is global. (Personal communication, MarxSIG, March 10, 2006)

In the view of the students, the cause of inequitable distribution of resources is "university senior management." The students' focus is not on the capitalist class, and this may block the development of their class consciousness. What is necessary to explain is *why* university senior management made such decisions, and to implicate their decisions in the totality of capitalist practices.

This is *not* to argue that the student action and statement are not important. They are important, as are tens of thousands of other local, sectional, trade-based, and community-based issues, as we noted in the Introduction. And in such conditions class consciousness can develop. However, class consciousness cannot develop without the theory that, as Marx notes in his Afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital* volume 1, "represents the class whose vocation in history is the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition of all classes - the proletariat" (1867/1967a, p. 16). It is this very theory that Apple, in all his works, denies to the proletariat, and which we are working to make available.

It is also necessary to note that there is nothing "new" about the "middle class" fraction Apple describes here. As Apple is well aware (1992, p. 127), classical Marxism theorizes that "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental

production are subject to it" (Marx & Engels, 1965/1989, p. 64). But as Apple himself explains, "These ideas," (i.e., the ideas of the capitalist class) "were under constant threat, however. They needed constant attention because hegemonic control was not guaranteed. Because of the class conflicts also generated out of, and causing, changes in that mode of production, there always existed the possibility of different ideological tendencies which could subvert the dominant ones" (1992, p. 127).

What one of us (Kelsh, 1998, Part I, section II and Part II, section VIII) has theorized as the class fraction of knowledge workers constituting the knowledge industry is a class fraction that arises from the material circumstances Apple summarizes above. The concept of the knowledge industry follows Marx and Engels' understanding of management of the ruling ideas by "its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood" (1965/1989, p. 65). The knowledge industry, which opposes the organization of all workers into a proletariat class-conscious movement, is not a "new" fraction but a fraction that has a material basis in the relations of production and becomes quite prominent during prolonged periods of crisis in capitalism, which themselves occur more and more as the contradictions of capitalism intensify.

As the contradictions of capitalism intensify, it becomes necessary for the bourgeoisie to revolutionize the means of production to increase profit. It also becomes necessary for Capital to manufacture knowledges that ease workers through the shifts in the relations of production that the revolutionizing of the means entails. In other words, outsourcing, downsizing, intensification of work - all of these require that knowledge workers (academics, media commentators, publishers, and so forth) manufacture and disseminate knowledges that update the ruling ideology and *naturalize* it.

The understanding of the social put forth by Apple, where neither the economic, the political, nor the cultural sphere is determinant (1993, p. 25), and instead determination by any "sphere" is seen to be "historically contingent" (1993, p. 5), advances a view of the social in which local analyses are the only ones possible. In such a framework, it becomes impossible, as Ebert argues, "to connect the mediated [cultural practices] to other social practices, and consequently the inquiry into and analysis of the mediations, themselves, takes the place of knowledge of the social totality in which mediations are relays of underlying connections" (1996, pp. 42-43).

For historical materialists, however, "*cultural and ideological practices are not autonomous* but are instead primary sites for reproducing the meanings and subjectivities supporting the unequal gender, sexual, and race divisions of labor, and thus a main arena for the struggle against economic exploitation as well as cultural oppression" (Ebert, 1996, pp. 42-43, emphasis added). The work of the knowledge industry (those knowledge workers who update the ruling ideology and naturalize it) is to augment ideology rather than critique it and expose it as a site of class struggle. (4)

It is the work of the knowledge industry to augment ideology, and this is not "new." Augmenting ideology is the central practice of the knowledge industry which Marx does not name but nevertheless critiques in the Afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital*: "in France and in England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power. Thenceforth, the class-struggle, practically as well as theoretically, took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question, whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested inquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic" (1867/1967a, p. 15).

These prize-fighters - today they are "academostars" - manufactured the "reactionary socialism," "conservative, or bourgeois socialism," and "critical-utopian socialism and communism" critiqued in *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels (pp. 106-118). Those who, as Marx argues in the Afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital*, "still claimed some scientific standing and aspired to be something more than mere sophists and sycophants of the ruling-class, tried to harmonise the Political Economy of capital with the claims, no longer to be ignored, of the proletariat. Hence, a shallow syncretism, of which John Stuart Mill is the best representative" (p.15). In *Imperialism*, Lenin later theorized this fraction as a "stratum of bourgeoisified workers" who are "the real *agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement*, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real channels of reformism and chauvinism" (1939, p. 14).

All of this points out that Apple, in his claim that "binary working class/ruling class models neglect the crucial role played by the middle stratum" (1992, p. 134), is working as a part of the knowledge industry and manufacturing a claim. This relates directly to the second point we would like to make about this "professional and managerial new middle class." It is that Michael W. Apple himself, along with the many others who truncate, dismiss, trivialize, and otherwise evacuate the Marxist concept of class of its core transformative concepts, are a part of this fraction.

In distorting in order to dismiss classical Marxism, and in substituting a Weberian-based theory of class for the Marxist theory of class, they engage in the very "product control" Apple discusses as the work of this "new" class fraction. As he notes, "managerial discourse provides 'subject positions' through which people can imagine themselves and their institutions in different ways" (2006, p. 25). That is *precisely what Apple does*, and his discourses are ideological in that they seek to enable individuals to solve in the theoretical imaginary contradictions rooted in the social relations of production.

It is the work of the vanguard, which opposes the "fraction of the professional new middle class" Apple advocates, to make transformative theory available to the proletariat (as we are attempting to do here). The vanguard is theorized by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*:

In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. (p. 91)

Apple forthrightly opposes the vanguard (2006, p. 81). Thus, while the capitalist class has its spokespersons, the proletariat does not! This is the case especially when one considers that all Apple offers as a role for those who oppose the "fraction of the professional new middle class" is what he refers to as a secretarial role: he wants a group to "act as secretaries for some of our colleagues in education and for the activists in multiple communities, making public their partial, but still successful,

resistances to the regime of regulation that we are currently experiencing" (2006, p. 122).

His service to the capitalist class is in full view here, as he deflects attention from the capitalist class and the regime of wage-labor and replaces it with the "regime of regulation," and offers only the dissemination of local experiences, which, as we have already argued, simply reiterates dominant discourses.

By discrediting and erasing the Marxist concept of class, Apple and others deny workers the access to revolutionary theory that is necessary for the development of class consciousness. As Lenin argued, "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (1902/1969, p. 25). In doing so, revisionist left theorists manufacture a knowledge that contributes to the production of subjects who are unable to understand their own position in the social (property) relations of production.

The Assimilation of the Left into the Service of Capitalist Interests

In the context of critiquing Apple as a member of this "professional and managerial new middle class," it is quite telling to note the following argument he makes about this "class": "Members of this fraction of the upwardly mobile professional and managerial new middle class do not necessarily believe in the ideological positions that underpin all aspects of the conservative alliance. In fact, in other aspects of their lives they may be considerably more moderate and even 'liberal' politically." Yet they do this work of management because "their own mobility *depends* on the expansion of both such expertise and the professional ideologies of control, measurement, and efficiency that accompany it" (2005, p. 387; 2006, p. 105).

This needs to be read in relation to Apple's reliance on and advocacy of Erik Olin Wright's work. Apple draws heavily on his work, and at the 2005 AERA convention in Montreal, advocated use of Wright's theory of class (Kelsh & Hill, notes, April 14, 2005).

Wright's formulation of class across his many works is a Weberian-based one that is useful to look at closely for several reasons. In addition to the fact that his ongoing

work on class is highly influential in the social sciences, he has participated in some of the crucial debates surrounding "new class" theories such as the 1979 debate over Barbara and John Ehrenreich's formulation of "the professional managerial class" anthologized in *Between Labor and Capital* (Walker, 1979). Wright is well-read in classical Marxist theory, having spent much of his professional career debating in a number of texts the "problems of the conceptual foundation of Marxist theory" with colleagues whose work now forms the core of what is known as "analytical Marxism" (Wright, Levine & Sober, 1992, pp. 2-7).

Moreover, Wright knows well that the classical Marxist concept of class is centered on relation to property and that one class has because the other does not: as he says, "the welfare of the rich causally depends on the deprivations of the poor - the rich are rich *because* the poor are poor; and that the welfare of the rich depends upon the *effort* of the poor" (Wright, 1989, p. 8; original emphases). He has furthermore revised his previous theory of "contradictory class locations," which was central to the debate over the Ehrenreich's theorization, in order to put exploitation rather than domination at its center (1989, pp. 12-14). Finally, he explicitly rejects the Weberian definitions of class because they are "'market based' definitions, whereas Marxist definitions were 'production based'" (1989, p. 13). And yet, in his book *The Debate on Classes* (1989), he reproduces a Weberian theory of class to which he adheres in subsequent texts (for example, *Class Counts*, 1997).

"Organization," Wright argues, "is a productive resource in its own right"; it is a "productive asset," a form of property which he conceives to be "independent of the expenditure of labor power, the use of means of production, or the skills of the producer" (1989, p. 16). Through this move, in which organization capacity or "knowledge" is severed from both the question of "organization (knowledge) for what purpose" and the material conditions of possibility that allow some forms of organization to surface and not others, Wright further pluralizes an already pluralized understanding of property (insofar as he already accepts Roemer's understanding of "skill" as property).

Thus for Wright, class is not constituted in the relations of production as Marx understands them, but in culture on the market, as Weber understands it. Wright's theory in the end is not fundamentally different from Lyotard's theorization of

postmodernism in which it is accepted that "knowledge has become the principle force of production over the last few decades" (1989, p. 5), and this despite Wright's ostensible return to the concept of exploitation. Because he pluralizes property, Wright's "exploitation" is still "domination" in the way that Anthony Giddens, following Weber, formulates it in relation to his understanding of "power" as "the capacity of actors to secure outcomes where the realization of these outcomes depends upon the agency of others" (1979, p. 93). This is a Weberian theory of power - "power" is "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber, 1914/1968, p. 926).

Wright's is a theory of class that substitutes domination for exploitation and puts it at the center of social life. Domination presupposes that power comes from the individual, from his or her "will." As such, it is a concept that cuts the relation between one's capacity to secure outcomes in one's favor, and the stolen labor-power of the proletariat that the capitalist class uses to enable one to secure outcomes in one's favor. As Weber writes, "the structure of dominancy and its unfolding is decisive in determining the form of social action and its orientation toward a 'goal.' Indeed, domination has played the decisive role particularly in the economically most important social structures of the past and present, viz., the manor on the one hand, and the large-scale capitalistic enterprise on the other " (1914/1968, p. 941). Power is here entirely separable from property and labor-power such that formulations and discussions of class can address power in local senses only, manufacturing and promulgating power as an issue of individual "will," "imagination," "hope," "commitment," or "competition," cut off from the social relations of production and thereby masking them.

Knowledge workers never stand outside the contradictions of capitalism and are subject to them, open to assimilation into the knowledge industry whose proposals for "reform" play into the occlusion of class and class interests that are beneficial to the bourgeoisie. As Angela Davis (1997) has recently argued, while militant activists who achieve positions of power in the state apparatus "truly believe that they will be able to bring about radical transformations from and within new positions of state power,"

under such conditions transformation is conceptualized very differently. The formulation of radical prison work as leading toward the reduction of prison populations and the abolition of jails and prisons as the primary means of addressing social problems such as crime, unemployment, undereducation, etc. recedes and is replaced with the goal of creating better, more progressive jails and prisons. I am not suggesting that we should not use whatever political arenas are available to us. However, once one becomes integrated into state structures, it becomes increasingly difficult to think about ways of developing radical oppositional practices. (pp. 307-309)

Wright's comments in his Preface to *Classes* (1985) speak to this assimilation, as he discusses how he has "become integrated into a nexus of rewards that is very alluring," and how he "do[es] not know" "whether or not. . . the work [on classes] has benefited or suffered from the particular conditions under which it was produced" (p. 3).

In relying on Wright's theorization of class, Apple himself is assimilated into this "nexus of rewards."

Acknowledging the capitalist-class interestedness of his position, however, is not something that, using his theory of the social, he would be obligated to do, or even recognize - the Weberian-derived understanding of class he uses is not relational, and thus provides Apple with an alibi for not accounting for his own theoretical position and its effects on the social totality.

Conclusion: For Class and Class Consciousness

The Weberian theory of class is dominant, and in schools as elsewhere, promotes intra-class competition. That is, it has a tendency to exacerbate divisions and antagonisms between students at different socioeconomic levels, as Brantlinger's (1993; 2003) work, which also uses a Weberian class framework, illustrates. These divisions and antagonisms can function as major obstacles to student agency and educational achievement at all socioeconomic levels. The reproduction and circulation of a Weberian-derived understanding of class is also anti-pedagogical because it professes that there are differences, but cannot explain why. The logical extension of it encourages the use among students and others of one's will and domination to obtain attributes - grades, favors - that enable one to get ahead within the system, and without ever questioning it. If one does not obtain such attributes that enable one to

"get ahead," the only reason within this logic for not doing so is not having tried hard enough.

Assuming a Weberian-derived theory of class creates problems for critiques of capitalism's role in socioeconomic inequity related to schools. Critical commentary tends to take the focus off the capitalist class and place "blame" on "upper/middle class" discursive practices, and it does so one-sidedly, that is, without explaining the historical and ideological reasons why these strata of the proletariat engage in such discursive practices. Such one-sided blaming is a vulgarized form of critique that is not pedagogical and thus not enabling of "middle" class development of capacity for historical materialist critique and thus class consciousness as part of the proletariat. This anti-pedagogical blaming functions as an exorcism of guilt and contradicts the explicit aim of such texts: to change the practices of these strata from those that enforce the existing order to those that work to expose and change it. Such texts thus occlude the theoretical means to expose and change the existing order, as well as the more necessary object of critique: the capitalist class and property relations.

Owing to this relay where focus is shifted from the capitalist class and property relations to the middle strata practices severed from relation to property relations, the "cause" of socioeconomic inequity and exploitation in schools is shifted from production practices to cultural practices, specifically to discursive practices. This happens because the upper/middle strata do not hold economic power and are seen, following Apple, Allman, Wright, and others to hold only organizational power that appears not to be rooted in the social relations of production - unless one focuses on the Marxist theory of property and class. Ultimately, the shift in focus away from class understood in terms of the Marxist theory of property is a practice on the part of knowledge workers that blocks development of knowledge-producing critique of capitalist class practices. It thus blocks the development of class consciousness necessary to intervene in and abolish the cause of socio-economic inequity: private ownership by the few of the means of production.

It has been our aim in this essay to critique the revisionist left that represents itself as producing the most useful analyses, and to critique it in order to expose the limits of its analyses, together with their implication in the support of capitalist class practices of exploitation. We hold that to most effectively contest the right, and the capitalist

class whose interests the right serves, the left must play a part - for example in local, national and global campaigns, and in sectional and particularistic movements - in building the Marxist understanding of social class, class consciousness, and class struggle, rather than occluding, in their culturalization of class, these understandings that are necessary to replace capitalism with socialism.

Notes

(1) In order to enable access on the part of the reader to fundamental texts of classical Marxism and set them in chronological relation to one another and such other texts as those of Weber, we provide in-text citations and references that include both the original date of publication, as well as the publication date of the editions we have used.

(2) The limited purpose of capitalism gives rise to numerous other inversions in the material conditions - the exploitative social relations of production - in which all persons live, for example: "past labour [capital], dominates living labour" (1894/1967c, p. 45); "it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman" (1867/1967a, p. 423); "in manufacture, in order to make the collective labourer, and through him capital, rich in social productive power, each labourer must be made poor in individual productive powers" (1867/1967a, p. 361); machinery, "the most powerful instrument for shortening labour-time, becomes the most unfailing means for placing every moment of the labourer's time and that of his family, at the disposal of the capitalist for the purpose of expanding the value of his capital" (1867/1967a, p. 408); . . . "property turns out to be the right, on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others or its product, and to be the impossibility, on the part of the labourer, of appropriating his own product" (1867/1967a, p. 584). Overall, Marx argues, "capital. . . becomes a very mystic being since all of labour's social productive forces appear to be due to capital, rather than labour as such, and seem to issue from the womb of capital itself . relations under which value is originally produced are pushed completely into the background" (1894/1967c, p. 827).

(3) We acknowledge that Michael W. Apple has for several decades kept issues of inequity at the forefront of educational theory and research, and alive in the minds of individuals. Such work is necessary. However, insofar as his work is descriptive rather than explanatory with reference to causality, it does not go far enough. Now - with unprecedented ravages to the environment, health, education, academic freedom, and so forth resulting from the practices of the capitalist class - now is the "untimely time" to move forward and foreground capitalist class society and the contradiction between the classes as the cause that must be abolished. It is time for what Marx referred to as "the ruthless criticism of everything existing," which as Marx notes is "ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be" (1843/1978, p. 13). It is in the interests of socially necessary societal development that we take up Marx's call for such criticism.

(4) What happens when the knowledge industry and other ideological state apparatuses do not carry out this function is analysed in Hill, 2004: "Books, banks and bullets: Controlling our minds - the global project of imperialistic and militaristic neo-liberalism and its effect on education policy," *Policy Futures*, 2, pp. 3-4 (Theme: Marxist Futures in Education).

[Http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pfie/content/pdfs/2/issue2_3.asp](http://www.wwwords.co.uk/pfie/content/pdfs/2/issue2_3.asp) and in Hill, 2001: "State Theory and The Neo-Liberal Reconstruction of Schooling and Teacher Education: A Structuralist Neo-Marxist Critique of Postmodernist, Quasi-Postmodernist, and Culturalist Neo-Marxist Theory", *The British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 22, 1, pp.137-157.

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