Challenging (Millennial) Generation Research in Education: A Critical/Cultural Approach

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Background on Project


Critical Discourse Analysis


- Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Phil Graham, Christina Schäffner, James Paul Gee, Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, Mary Talbot, Lilie Chouliaraki, Thomas Huckin, and Bob Hodge.
Discourse is [the] use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice. (p. 7)

Power is conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shapes of texts) in particular sociocultural contexts. (pp. 1-2)

Critical Discourse Analysis

- Mikhail Bahktin’s Theory of Genre
  - The [theory of genre] highlights the productivity and creativity of discourse practice and its realization in texts which are heterogeneous in their forms and meanings, the heterogeneity emanating from their intertextuality; texts are constituted from other already produced texts and from potentially diverse text types (genres, discourse). (p. 2)

- Antonio Gramsci’s Theory of Hegemony
  - The theory of hegemony highlights both how power relations constrain and control productivity and creativity in discourse practice, and how a particular relatively stabilized configuration of discourse practices (‘order of discourse’) constitutes one domain of hegemony. (p. 2)

Critical Discourse Analysis

- CDA is consolidated here as a ‘three-dimensional’ framework where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice. (p. 2)

- Three levels social formation (macro), social institution (meso), and social action (micro). For example, teacher-student relations are prefigured at the social formation level, carried out with respect to institutional policies, and manifest in social interactions.

Objections to CDA

- Some claim that economic structures are more dominant than ideological (i.e., linguistic).

- Some claim that ideology is a truth/false claim which falsely privileges academics as knowers.

- Some claim that we live in hyperreality where social life has no meaning outside of unending fragmentation.

- Some conceptualize ideology merely as worldview and relativize the power and mechanisms that are embedded in the process of competing ideologies.

History of Generations

- The Lost Generation
  - 1880-1900
  - Gertrude Stein to Ernest Hemingway, 1926

- The Greatest Generation
  - 1901-1924
  - Tom Brokaw, 1998

- The Silent Generation
  - 1925-1942
  - Time magazine, 1951

- The Baby Boomers
  - 1946-1964
  - Washington Post, 1977
History of Generations

- **Generation X**
  - 1965-1982
  - Robert Capa, 1955, Art Essay
  - Deverson and Hamblett, *Generation X*, 1965,
  - Coupland, 1991, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*

- **Millennial**
  - 1982-2000
Questions CDA Leads us to Ask about Millennials, Generations, and Education

- How do generational discourses (re)produce neoliberal capitalist relations?
- How do generational discourses mobilize class antagonisms?
- How do generational discourses constitute a form of educational governmentality?
- How do generational discourses assume a “universal” subject in education?
How do Generational Discourses (Re)produce Neoliberal Capitalist Relations?

- Generational labels create, rather than describe, a generational cohort.

- Primary purpose for generational labels is to market to and about a population.
Generational “Research”: A Billion Dollar Industry

- *Keeping The Millennials*, Sujansky and Ferri-Reed
- *The Rise of the Millennial Parents*, Pedersen
- *Millennials and the Workplace*, Singh, Bhandarker, and Rai
- *Millennial Momentum*, Winograd and Hais
- *Millennials Rising*, Howe and Strauss
- *Serving the Millennial Generation*, Edited
- *The Millennials*, Ranier and Ranier
- *Generation We*, Greenberg
How do Generational Discourses Mobilize Class Antagonisms?

- The Great Recession of 2007

- Unemployment 08-12
  - From 5% (08) to 10% (10) to 9% (12)

- Graduate School
  - Discontinue subsidized loans, 2012

http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000
Baby Boomer and Millennial Misrecognition

- Baby Boomer: Has it better than his parents and his kids.
- Generation Y: Are slackers.
- College Graduates: Gets hired with an LSD in high school, got diploma, union job, easily supported 4 kids, and now retired with a pension.

http://www.quickmeme.com/Old-Economy-Steven/page/1/
Baby Boomer and Millennial Misrecognition

- STFU Millennials: 5 Easy Ways not to Act Entitled, Dawson, NY Post
- Entitled Millennial Workers of the World, Unite!, Levitz, NY Magazine
- Millennial Manpower: Why the Trophy Generation Can’t Find Jobs, Hall, Talent Management
How do Generational Discourses Constitute a form of Educational Governmentality?

- Enigmatic Relationship to Critical Thinking
  - Critical thinking for profit
  - Subjugated knowledge of youth
  - Discarded knowledge, discarded youth
Educational Policy Enforcing Monovocality

- According to Ken Kay, president of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, the 21st century skills set “is the ticket to economic upward mobility in the new economy” (Gewertz, 2007). Business and industry is providing a very clear message that students need the skills to “work comfortably with people from other cultures, solve problems creatively, write and speak well, think in a multidisciplinary way, and evaluate information critically. And they need to be punctual, dependable, and industrious.” (Gewertz, 2007).

- Iowa Legislature established the Iowa 21st century framework
  - civic literacy
  - employability skills
  - financial literacy
  - health literacy
  - technology literacy
Educational Policy Enforcing Monovocality

- No Child Left Behind/ Race to the Top
  - Puts schools into competition
  - Failing schools are punished/successful schools rewarded
  - Stick/carrot

- In an economy where knowledge is the most valuable commodity a person and a country have to offer, the best jobs will go to the best educated—whether they live in the United States or India or China. In a world where countries that out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow, the future belongs to the nation that best educates its people. Period. We know this. -President Obama, Race to the Top

- States receiving grants can “help students outcompete workers around the world” -President Obama, Race to the Top
How do Generational Discourses Summon a “Universal” Subject in Education?

- Zero Tolerance Policies
  - Millennial student thrive on structure
  - “To be a student is to be watched, tracked, monitored, and under suspicion by authorities at all time” (Alex Means, *Schooling in the Age of Austerity*, p. 93)

- The Indebted Subject
  - Precariousness

- Homo Economicus
  - Rational, market subject
Debt as a form of Social Control

- Student Incarceration
  - Black students 3x as likely to be suspended (APA, 2008)
  - Black students do not “exhibit higher rates of disruption or violence that would warrant higher rates of discipline” (p. 854)
  - Other youth of color, students from poverty, and students with disabilities are 1.5-3x more likely to be suspended or incarcerated than their white, middle-class, and able-bodied counterparts (Losen, 2011)

- Student Debt
  - General Characteristics
  - Students at-risk to the capitalist system

- For Profit Higher Education


Parting Thoughts

- The rearticulated order of discourse is a contradictory one: authoritarian elements coexist with democratic and egalitarian ones. (p. 77)

- Salvage or abolish generational identity?