GRIGGS, CHARLES BRADFORD, Ph.D. Positive Freedom: An Exploration of
Pedagogical Citizenship. (2010)
Directed By H. Svi Shapiro. 216pp.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the pedagogical attempt to teach for
citizenship in the public school setting. Using the tools of critical/ liberatory pedagogy
the critical scholar embarked on a discovery of the foundations of his pedagogical
practice, by exploring his subject stance while teaching with a democratic mindset. This
dissertation proposes that there is a crisis of democratic citizenship in this country. The
crisis is due to forces of oppression and is exacerbated by the lack of democratic practice
in schools and society. By uncovering the techniques inherent in critical pedagogy and
the free school movement the dissertation seeks to place the subject/ researcher within the
mental context of liberation while engaged in a systematic autobiographical record of his
teaching practices. From this autobiographic stance the researcher will reflect upon his
own teaching and understandings as they are presented.

The findings indicate that liberatory/ critical pedagogy is a difficult practice and
creates tensions within the authoritarian bodies that control schooling.   The research also
suggests that democracy is only an abstract concept in schooling and cannot be practiced
in traditional public school settings. The original premise of the research, that there is a
"crisis of democratic citizenship" and part of that crisis is due to the lack of practice in
schools, is advanced by this dissertation.

POSITIVE FREEDOM: AN EXPLORATION OF PEDAGOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2010

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APPROVAL PAGE

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Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a prominent educational tradition in the United States in which the future
of secondary education is premised on the recognition that in order for freedom to
flourish in the worldly space of the public realm, citizens had to be educated for
the task of self-government. Education in this context was linked to public life
through democratic values such as equality, justice, and freedom, rather than as an
adjunct of the corporation whose knowledge and values were defined largely
through the prism of commercial interests (Giroux, 2003, p. 5-6).

Every man and every body of men on earth possess the right of self government
(Jefferson, 1790).

…a teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who
can arouse young persons to go in search of their own (Greene, 1988, p. 14).

When I think of democracy, I think of open spaces, ideas flying back and forth
carried by the winds of conversation and debate. When I think of democracy, I
think of multiple faces all different colors all singing different tunes with the same
chorus. When I think of democracy, I hear the bell tolls of heroes whose voices
ring across the dawning age. When I think of democracy, I think of invention and
sacrifice for the greater good. When I think of democracy, I see people
communing with agreed principles called laws. When I think of democracy, I see
a work of art. When I think of democracy…..(untitled, Griggs, 2009).

When I was a child I had this dynamic view of democracy and the United States.

The view was vast and free, like an unending landscape or the shores of an endless ocean.

I saw all that possibility, all that talent just waiting, yearning to be freed. The freedom

that encased the idea of democracy in my mind was powerful, it was not defeatable; it

was everything and everyone. The vision that I had allowed for no subordinates; it was

equality. I saw our founding fathers, farmers and merchants, just trying to make a living and, in doing so, stumbling on a government, that provided much more than a space to make a living. It provided a space for all the contrasting pictures. I saw no divisions, pain, hate, or suffering, just love and acceptance of everyone and everything.

This naive view of our culture does not ring true, but in my mind I cannot seem to give it up. I cannot remove the picture in my mind of the statue of liberty rising over our shores and beckoning everyone, to come for any reason, to take part in our democratic experiment. This cultural view fuels the fire of what could be, in my mind. From this perspective I refuse to give up the idea of functioning democracy.

I feel that as a society we can move closer to this vision if we embrace the ability of the human mind to learn, converse, and love. I came to teaching to further this goal, to entice this proposition that democracy can be practiced on a practical scale. There are in existence many philosophies and constructs that are acceptable to such an expansion. The two that I have chosen to explore within the bounds of my teaching and learning are Liberatory Pedagogy and the Democratic Schools Movement. In doing so I would like to understand the democratic space, subjecthood and the tension these ideas create if practiced by myself and others in a public school setting. In essence, I would like to facilitate pedagogical citizenship.

CONCERN

There are several major factors that have influenced the democratic culture negatively, especially within schools but also within society. Three of these factors that warrant notice are consumerism, militarism and the privatization of public space. These

factors have limited the subjectivity of citizens and curtailed the application of democracy thereby producing a sublime pressure on the practice of education. The influence of these ideas provides the contextual demand for an investigation into schools as a nexus of the clash between these negative factors and democratic culture. This contextual demand crystallized interest in exploring the topic of liberatory pedagogy and the free school movement as a means of equalizing or combating this assault on freedom and citizenship happening within the confines of a supposed democratic institution and culture.

Consumerism

One of the greatest assaults on democratic culture comes from the subtle process of taught consumerism. It has come to my attention over the last few years that school children have not been taught the process of citizenship; instead in its place, they have been exposed mainly to the ideas of themselves as consumers (Giroux, 2003; DeGraff, 2005). Within this structure, students are overwhelmed with the idea of "invidious comparison"; they are constantly being compared to each other. This tactic advances the cause of consumerism and makes the students wary of each other's advances and successes. The powers of the marketplace have become the standard of education.

Consumerism is constantly being used as a tacit guide to move the students where they *should* be going. Statements such as: "If you want to get a good job…..", "Don't you want to be able to drive a car like that?", "You better finish your homework, or do well on this test so you can get into a good college, and get a great job." All these statements lead a student to believe that an individual's worth is based on what he/ she

can purchase/ consume. The repetition presupposes; that there are only so many good jobs to go around, just like there are only so many fast cars and that if a person doesn't get the best job and the fastest car, then that person's worth will be less than someone who does. This type of thinking, however, is extremely dangerous. It does not allow the student to see into their own creativity; they simply do not have time because they are constantly in invidious comparison with each other.

Bell curve

The grading system based on the bell curve is another example of how teachers have to make market-based type comparisons of students. The very idea of the curve tends to create itself, because, if everyone became proficient at a standard then the standard, would be changed to create the bell curve again. All these comparisons teach the students that they individually are everything and there is no "we" only "I" and this "I" is always in competition with other "I's".

Patriotic Consumer

Built into this notion of the citizen is the cast of the consumer. "The invitation to the public was to view consumption not just as a matter of private expenditure, self-styling and gratification, but as an act of political identification through which the 'patriotic' consumer signals support for the Western way of life" (Soper, 2008, p. 568). Casting ourselves and our students as consumers/ citizens we make a political statement about how we as a society are supposed to function. Therefore this whole premise promotes neoliberalism as a function of the school system. "Most generally neoliberalism is a philosophy viewing market exchange as a guide for all human action.

Redefining social and ethical life in accordance with economic criterion and expectations, neoliberalism holds that human freedom is best achieved through the operation of the markets" (Dean, 2008, p. 48). This negates the function of a natural right of man to govern and or limit the power of the state. The good citizen means only being able to function as a consumer, who can make the best decisions on what to buy (Dean, 2008). Our school system does not seem to support creating a thinking democratic subject but an alignment of thought to produce the structure necessary to create and sustain an object/ consumer marketplace. "Made over in the image of corporate culture, schools are no longer valued as a public good but as a private interest; hence, the appeal of such schools is less in their capacity to educate students according to the demands of critical citizenship than it is about enabling students to master the requirements of a market-driven economy" (Giroux, 2006, p. 162).

Packaged education

Consumption, the vehicle of the marketplace, seems to not only have taken hold in the student's mind, it has become the very educational space itself. Curricula are now packaged and delivered without a single student being able to input the process. This consumptive, neoliberal bent treats the student as object not subject, taking ownership and creativity out of the learning environment and mechanizing the whole process under the guise of standards and objectives. Curriculum is now designed to control the learner and to push him or her into being the most productive and proficient object that he or she can be within the assembly line of education (Pinar, 1998, Giroux, 2006).

Gatto (2009) describes the product of this method, "Education, in the words of the famous economists (William Playfair), captains of industry (Andrew Carnegie), and even a man who would be president (Woodrow Wilson), was a means of keeping the middle and lower classes in line and of keeping the engines of capitalism running" (p. 21).

It is important to note these features because they play a role in the subject assuming an object position. The object stance is not one of the democratic citizen; one has to have subjecthood to create democratic thinking and responsibility. The notion of the consumer/ object citizen within and without schools has corrupted the original social imaginary of the subject/ citizen that has a voice in the operation of government.

Distorted social imaginary

The social imaginary is the idea of society that a person holds within his or her own mind. In the constant barrage of twenty-four hour news and cable channels (even channels within the schools themselves: Channel One) the citizen/ student mind is being stressed with a distortion of the ideas of how society functions within social imaginary. Taylor (2007) describes this further:

> There is also something about the way the media of mass communication work in a society that is largely driven by consumption, which means in this field, driven by ratings. In the competition for big audiences, news and public affairs discussion get pulled toward the new hybrid phenomenon for which the word infotainment has been coined. Public affairs have to be packaged so that they have some of the same draw as entertainment. And this introduces its own kind of distortion: simplification of the issues into simple polarizations, encapsulating complex positions into the sound bites and the like (p. 127).

This distortion makes everything polar and the critical 3rd or 4th positions that might be crucial to the solving of a complex problem are not interrogated. This keeps the public

moving from pole to pole without solving problems. It also allows the population to be washed with propaganda as the poles attempt to sway power from one side to another.

Because such practices tend to discount people or ideas in society that do not operate in ether pole, the democratic social imaginary is so disrupted that change becomes nearly impossible, and the buds of burgeoning mass function and grass root movements are crushed before they can take shape.

Under this perverted imaginary, students are perceived not only as consumers/ future consumers (objects), but as a group in society that is feared and neglected, basking in nihilism, a body of experience that cannot be tapped for future social growth (Giroux, 2003, West, 2004). These students are poised as apt pupils for the application of a militaristic framework designed to control and distort the functions of a democratic culture.

Militarism

> The present system of institutionalized schooling is a product of two or three centuries of economic and political thinking that spread primarily from a militaristic state in the disunited Germanies known as Prussia. That philosophy destroyed classical training for the common people, reserving it for those who were expected to become leaders (Gatto, 2009, p. 21)

Within the framework of education there has been increasing pressure from our nationalistic and authoritarian administrative structures to use force to create order within society, beginning with our schools. The use of violent force to solve problems can be termed a type of militarism (Franz, 1980). Youth are being portrayed as dangerous and unpredictable, there has even been evidence to portray at least older teens as "evil" and a

threat to public life (Giroux, 2006). Students are suspect from the time they enter the

school buildings, subject to video surveillance and careful monitoring by school staff. If

a student steps out of line, especially if he or she is of color, then the full weight of the

policies would be dropped on him or her, no discussion and no compromise. This does

not always happen, but the overriding threat that administrators will take a punitive

stance is the norm, not the exception. The idea that a student could make a mistake and

learn from that mistake is in question. In North Carolina, there can even be a criminal

charge for disorderly conduct levied on a student who misbehaves or doesn't follow a

teacher directive. "Zero tolerance laws make is easier to expel students rather than for

school administrators to work with parents, community justice programs, and religious

organizations and social service agencies" (Giroux, 2003, p. 165).

Content control

Not just the overt demonstrations of militarization have been displayed in schools

but the covert as well, to include the control of subject matter, distribution of material and

control of mindsets through high-stakes testing. Furomoto (2005) describes, "In this

broader argument regarding school militarization, the instrumental policies of NCLB,

such as high stakes testing and punitive sanctions, serve to maintain the power and

domination of the ruling capitalist class and to diminish youth agency and capacity to

critique and engage authentically in society" (p. 2).

These militaristic policies keep the students from ever engaging the world as

subjects of their own knowledge, because they are never able to create and or imagine

any other alternatives. Therefore, we have only begun to understand the damage from

being exposed to the effects of such a system. This lack of capacity to critically think and

interrogate the environment or system that one has been placed in leaves our democracy

at a distinct disadvantage and without collective agency.

Defensible only positions

John Dewey warned against the treat of militarization to the notion of agency.

"Militarism on campus breeds chauvinistic intolerance through conformity rather than an

international understanding based on diversity of opinion. Contrary to the goals of

education, such as social cooperation and human understanding, a militaristic influence

within an academic environment, Dewey always argued, would create the impression that

war is an inevitable way of life" (Howlett, 2001, p. 6). This implies to the student that

fighting is the best way to solve problems and as such should always be included as the

first option of the citizen. It negates the power of understanding and diplomacy that

make up the majority of a democracy's decisions and power. Thus the militaristic

attitude inclines itself to a defensible position and not to an in-depth analysis of the

conditions that created the problem. The objectification of the military stance is not

condusive to subjecthood or resistance, which are the mainstays of collective citizenship.

Dangerous places

The bi-product of this militarization of society is that schools are seen as

dangerous places that need military type operations, to protect society's interest. The

schools have addressed societies concerns by adding more structure and unprecedented

surveillance (Giroux, 2003; Giroux, 2006). The surveillance is designed to provide the

administration with the tools to adjust behavior before it becomes so-called dangerous.

The mindset of fixing a problem through force, even with our youth, runs deeply in our

society that claims to be democratic. Giroux (2003) states, "In a society deeply troubled

by their presence, youth prompt a public rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance, which

translate into social policies that signal the shrinking of democratic public spheres, the

highjacking of civic culture, and the increasing militarization of public space" (Para, 4).

The conception within school leadership that students do not have the cognitive presence

to address issues that are always part of the processes of democracy is another

manifestation of just such fear. Therefore it is society's duty to use "violence" against

each the objects of its fear, mainly youth.

> Young people have become a generation of suspects in a society destroyed by the
> marriage of market fundamentalism, consumerism, and militarism. But the point
> here is not merely to argue that youth are our lowest national priority, but to
> understand the importance of connecting the crisis in democracy to the current
> war against young people in order both to remind adults of their ethical and
> political responsibility to future generations and to re-theorize what it means to
> invest in youth as a symbol for nurturing civic imagination and collective
> resistance in the face of the suffering of others, especially among young people.
> (Giroux, 2008, p. 113)

Whereas militarism shrinks the capacity of the mind to address complex issues by

reducing all the factors mentioned previously that help stimulate creative thinking, there

also seems to be a reduction of public space. Public space is a concrete area where ideas

can be mined and batted around so citizens can inform one another of their experiences.

Just as the mind is shrinking the public spaces are shrinking where people can share their

ideas in public conversation to find public solutions to complex problems.

Privatization of Public Space

There is a notion within an increasing section of scholarship that there is a shrinking of the "Commons" or public space. The difference between private and public space has to do with access, or control of the space itself. There are many spaces that look like they are public when in fact they are **bonus** private spaces that are quite different from what can be defined as public. I would also like to discuss the idea of livability in the modern sense as it relates to the concept of the citizen and its relations to space.

Public space can be deemed a space that is controlled by a democratic state and has few restrictions as to who can be occupants within its boundaries. "The best spaces present opportunities for discussion, deliberation and un-programmed spontaneous contact with those maintaining diverse viewpoints on the world" (Nemeth, 2009, p. 2). True public spaces have very little restrictions as to the citizens and visitors that can use them and participate in diverse contact, with almost no surveillance or control. An urban space such as Central Park in New York City would constitute an example of a true public space.

Bonus space

Within the new urban landscape there is another space that is assumed public, because of its use and the way it is perceived. Termed **bonus** space, this space is actually private space that has the look of a public space. The difference is that there is an active private management that limits and controls access to the site itself. The reason this is important is that within many urban spaces it looks as though there are quite a few public

spaces, people do not feel constricted as long as you belong to a group that has access. These sites actually are not public spaces and do not allow the people that occupy them the same citizenship rights that true public spaces offer. The privilege that each of these spaces provide is a direct reflection of the private management of each of these spaces. These spaces actually have more to do with a consumption mindset and making consumers feel well, than they do with providing for an active citizenship that may require an area to protest (Hankins & Powers, 2009, Nemeth, 2009). Examples of these spaces are common areas in shopping malls, or an interior common area in an office building. These spaces seem public but are actually private.

The bonus space movement has sprung up due to the shrinking budgets of municipalities and the rise of corporations. These open spaces which were added to the designs of commercial and private areas, provided a host of advantages for the private entities that created and used them. In an early zoning change in 1961 in New York City, investment corporations were allowed to build bigger building's with more density per capita if they added bonus spaces, perceived open spaces for the public to mingle and commune. By adding a percentage of these bonus spaces, building densities could allow for greater profit and allowed the private companies to manage these spaces, taking the burden off of the city (Nemeth, 2009).

The problem is that these private companies could also limit access to these spaces, according to their own criterion, not one set by public process or debate. Private property owners at will can limit access to these areas based on any criterion deemed appropriate by the private property owners themselves. According to Nemeth

(2009),"Scholars document the numerous legal cases involving the 'public forum doctrine', where nearly all courts have sides with private property owners exercising this right" (p.19). Therefore, if one does not meet the criterion of occupancy then the companies can make him or her through law enforcement or their own private security company, leave the premises by force.

The implications of the loss of true public space are profound; where can the ideas of the political be protested and discussed if parties can be excluded on any criterion? Where will the manifestation of freedom occur, if there are not any welcoming locales for its presence? As Rene Char expressed in his recollections of the French Resistance in WWII, "It was not because they were taking action against tyranny, but because they had become challengers, had taken the initiative upon themselves and therefore, without knowing or even noticing it, had begun to create that public space between themselves where freedom could appear" (quoted by Greene, 1998, p. 15).

Mass forgetting

There is a distinct need to guard the idea of the **public** within a democracy. The idea itself brings about its own critique of class struggle and heroic understandings. In some Latin American countries, there is a question of mass, active, public forgetting of the struggles these countries had to undertake to become democracies. "This politics of forgetting is reflected in the urban landscapes and public spaces" (D'Arcus, 2009, p.4). The idea that if there is always a true public space then democracy can survive due to the ability of people to recollect and envision en mass (Hankins & Powers, 2009). D'Arcus (2009) mentions a, "Central collection of public spaces where citizens have dramatized

tensions around a variety of significant issues…" (p. 3). The ability to assemble is one of

the founding features of democracy and an active citizenship. If we have to have

permission, from a private entity that may or may not agree with our protest or forum, we

could be denied this right.

Public viewpoint

Not only at issue is the right to assemble, but what of the collective viewpoint of

the public to see into a future that would be for all? How can we possibly understand the

public without spaces to interact and develop a public imagination? These public places

with no private restrictions where we have to **be with** whoever shows up, to collectively

see each other, to work out our differences and help each other, with a collective

imagination, are inseparable from a democracy.

Iveson (2007) discusses the ideas intersecting the public and viewpoint:

> …being public is not simply a matter of associating or gathering with others in a
> particular place. It is also a matter of imagining oneself and those others to be
> part of a public which exists beyond the spatial and temporal limits of any
> particular association or gathering. (quoted by Hankins & Powers, 2009, p. 6).

The collective viewpoint is a very spiritual/ ethical type of concern. Socrates was known

to be interested in such himself, having said that it was our duty to tend the souls of men,

to make it our business to "achieve the mature understanding and capacity for moral

judgment essential to the practice of a mature citizenship that looks beyond individual

advantage to the well-being of the whole" (Korten, 2006, p. 149). How are we going to

know how people feel if we exclude certain members from the collective because of a

private criterion? The ramification for democracy without true public space is hostile.

Public spaces in schools

Within the public school system there are no public spaces for the students to mingle and form a democratic consensus. Every action and movement is being controlled by the administration to lessen the degree of altercations that occur in the school setting. It is not unusual that students brought up in this style of education become accustomed to not having public spaces to voice their views, they were educated too be passive, to take what is given as "reality". Maxine Greene (1988) mentions this behavior, "There is little need for security police to keep order if enough people internalize this view, if they perceive themselves as passive audiences and accept that role, if they convince themselves that they are powerless in the face of the tragicomedy being enacted" (p. 15).

> They would sacrifice freedom for bread and happiness at any time; they know the value of submission; they know the happiness that it brings (Dostoevsky, 1945, p. 302).

Control and surveillance

The control and surveillance of our schools has given them the "reality examples" of how life will be once they are members of society. They will accept the bonus spaces with all the surveillance and control as public spaces because they do not understand what actual public spaces are designed to do. They will feel safe and secure, of course unless they are from a group that has been excluded, and then they will feel the absence of something. The feeling will only lend itself, especially if they have been trained for

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docility, to laughing about all the rules but never interrogating from a subject position why they are feeling strange about the experience.

The middle class educated in such a manor will not just simply investigate such experiences. They will, as Cornel West (2004) states, "… wall themselves off into comfortable communities, both physical and social, in which they can safely avert their eyes from the ugly realities that afflict so many of our people" (p.65). The apathy mentioned above could stem from the lack of public spaces, especially when they were young, for the people to practice public dialogue, places that can bring other possibilities to light and make public both concerns of the heart and a way to be truly democratic (Greene, 1988, West, 2004). John Dewey referred to this phenomenon as an "eclipse" of the public (Greene, 1988).

Our young people soon to be citizens will not have any practice or instruction being citizens. They will be unprepared for life in a democracy; they will simply follow the calling of consumerism. There is a crisis of democracy in our society and our educational frameworks do not address this problem. Democracy is simply ignored, or even maligned, within the manifestation of societies fear. There is no democratic public space, in this public place. It is too dangerous (Giroux, 2003).

The students/ future citizens will be unable to exist in the dialectics of a true democracy without public spaces to challenge the existing power structures and vision a new society. The culmination of thousands of future citizens having no voice: not able to express their citizenship, ideals or concerns, in collectivity will find our democracy like

Babylon, "weighed on the scales and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27, New International Version).

VISION

In the designs of this dissertation it is necessary to describe the synthesis, or designation of the Collected Realized Self- Governed Citizen (CRSC). This description is designed to give the reader of this dissertation the explicit fundamental characteristics that this researcher deems are important for a citizen of a functioning democracy. The term "functioning" is used because our society is not functioning in its capacity as a democratic culture. It has been this researcher's experience that the current climate in public education is hindering this function, as well as the overall climate of consumerism, militarism and casual ideas of the public space that were described earlier in this discussion.

What is a Collected Realized Self-Governed Citizen (CRSC)? These terms will be separated and unpacked one at a time, then reassembled to provide an overall picture of how this particular citizen would behave, react or understand the process of democracy and ideas of freedom. Within this description certain common notions of freedom will be released and other ideas will be accrued as paramount to understanding the role of a citizen. The idea of freedom will be based on Maxine Greene's concept of Positive Freedom as an action within the world. Greene's framework will be discussed at length in the unpacking of the term "Realized" within the title of this research, but also the threads will flow through the entire description of the ideal CRSC.

Collected

The term **collected** refers to the notion that *citizen* is more than one idea. It is a

myriad of concepts working in tandem. According to Joel Westheimer (2008) there are

three views of what constitutes the vision of what a good citizen is as seen in citizenship

education. These are as follows: "the Personally Responsible Citizen, the Participatory

Citizen and the Social Justice Oriented Citizen" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 8).

The Personally Responsible Citizen is one who does the "right" thing within the

scope of our consumer society. This Citizen would recycle and contribute to charities, as

well as obey the law (Westheimer, 2008). An example of this citizen would be the

person who went to New Orleans after hurricane Katrina and helped with the rebuilding.

The character words associated with this citizen would be: "honest, responsible, voting

and law abiding" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 9).

The Participatory Citizen would be active within the community on a personal

level. He/she would belong to civic organizations, as well as hold leadership positions

within those organizations. This citizen also displays knowledge about how government

works and understands some of the social constructs operating within society

(Westheimer, 2008). The character words associated with the citizen are: "leadership,

participation, civic knowledge" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 9).

The Social Justice Oriented Citizen would be looking at systemic functions within

society. This citizen would be involved in social justice groups trying to change some of

the functions of society. He/she would notice problems on a larger scale than just within

the community, and want to help through group involvement to effect a change on policy.

The character words associated with this citizen are: "questioning, change, challenge injustice, global" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 9).

Digital natives

All these views of citizenship have noble ideas and feelings associated with membership in each category. Within the current research, there is also a split between what some have called digital natives and the mentioned above traditional casts of the citizen. Bennet et al (2009) describes these two positionalities as (DC) dutiful citizen and (AC) the actualizing citizen. The dutiful citizen is one who uses the traditional means of political action (political parties, unions, elections, churches and other institutions) for expressing their views. The actualizing citizen is one who was born after 1981, and is deemed a "digital native", which is a person who grew up in the digital age. This citizen does not trust the traditional means of participation and prefers to use a more individualist form of involvement. They focus on concepts in the scope of "lifestyle politics," such as political consumerism, communication through digital media, and do not trust tradition news or politicians, volunteers at sites that interest them individually (Bennet et al, 2009).

These two forms overlap with the previous three in most dimensions, except the idea that voting, which flows as the least common denominator within the Westheimer, description does not have to be included within Bennet's AC model.

My use of the term *collected* is designed to denote that my understanding of true citizenship encompasses all of the current paradigms, to include at the least voting, at the most being involved in social justice movements. The collected citizen must make the effort to move fluidly between these descriptions and collect the notables from each of

them to arrive at an inclusive citizenship foundation. Through scholarship the citizen

must embrace political and social knowledge just to function as an informed,

protest/voter; thereby, being able to critique society as needed and comment on it through

active democratic processes, protest or voting.

> Everything here is the path of a responding that examines as it listens. Any path always risks going astray, leading astray. To follow such paths takes practice in going. Practice needs craft. Stay on the path, in genuine need, and learn the craft of thinking, unswerving, yet erring (Heidegger, 1971, p. 184).

Realized

The term *realized* denotes the concept that the citizen as mentioned previously

must be a subject/ thinker. John Dewey used the term "mind" as a verb (Greene, 1998).

The realized citizen must understand his role as an active thinking member/ subject of

society, not just a passive user of freedom. Maxine Greene (1998) discusses her views on

the aspect of freedom within the ideas of the citizen and democracy. She states that

people in modern democracies feel that freedom is a birthright and the function of it

within our society is about what citizens don't have to do. Greene describes this as

negative freedom, the notion that one can "escape or be released" from their duties, just

because this is a democracy. One can sit back and relax as other people, corporations and

entities make use of our systems, to further their goals. As long as the citizen has use of

facilities and has products to choose from they can withdrawal from public action and not

do anything political (Greene, 1998).

Resistance

Many times in order for Positive Freedom to occur there has to be something that has stopped the citizen from actualizing something about themselves or their world that they deem is needed. Resistance to some perceived deficit within your scope of freedom can bring about a shift toward a more active involvement, a subject position. If consumerism is dictating your views then you are not likely to care about the fact that there are starving people in the United States. You would believe that they are starving because they are lazy. You are not starving; therefore everything is good. You do not have to do anything to help them; you are free. If you are not a thinker this will not bother you. It will just be "reality".

> Greene (1998) explains, I think he means that there is no consciousness of obstruction, no resentment or restraint, when a person experiences no desire to change or to questions, like so many people now living under dictatorships. If there is nothing a person particularly want to say, he/she will not suffer from censorship or controls on freedom or speech. The individual simply feels free; It is not different than breathing; the condition simply is (p. 11).

But if you have lost your job or you personally know someone who can't afford to feed their kids, you feel resistance. If you are trying to make a point within a town meeting and you are cut off by someone on the opposite side, if your son is killed in a war that you do not feel is justified then you feel awareness of such resistance. Resistance from something can be the key to understanding positive freedom. If you are not a thinker, you might not even notice the facts that are in front of you, the injustice, the prejudice, the pain; you simply will not see it. You will not know the subjecthood that you posses to change it. It just is.

Greene (1988) states "What is common to all is a determination to act against what is experienced as oppression, coercion, injustice, exclusion, neglect" (p. 24). She is commenting on the fact that freedom is addressed as something when it is not present, not seen. Positive Freedom can stem from resistance to the forces of injustice or coercion, or manipulation. Subjecthood grows with the idea of resistance and the two concepts feed one another.

Once there is a perception of dominance or oppression the individual becomes somewhat of a personal catalyst to construct a form of resistance for that particular instance, creating an active subject/ citizen. Freedom actually manifests itself as a lack thereof, not as something that is had. The Frankfurt School had some interesting insights on this occurrence. The passive citizen, once realizing that there is a force compressing freedom, created dialectic between it and the freedom that was lacking; became knowing. Giroux (1983) describes, "The Frankfurt School theorists believed that it was only in an understanding of the dialectic between the individual and society that the depth and extent of domination as it existed both within and outside of the individual could be open to modification and transformation" (p. 28). Thus the movement from negative to its opposite can be posed from the space of society, the individual, and the structure of whatever is perceived as domination. "They take the obstruction personally; it is the way in which their lived situation speaks to them. To be something other than an object, a cipher, a thing, such a person must reach out to create an opening; he/she must engage directly with what stands against him/her no matter what the risk" (Greene, 1998, p. 11).

Giroux indicates how resistance and other radical forms of insight might act and where it would be created. "In this case, it would be knowledge that would instruct the oppressed about their situation as a group situated within specific relations of domination and subordination. It would be knowledge that would illuminate how the oppressed could develop a discourse free from the distortions of their own partly mangled cultural inheritance" (Giroux, 1983, p. 35).

Resistance could be deemed awareness. Once the thinker citizen is aware of the prejudice, or manipulation he has been relieved of the illusion of "everything is ok". "For Marx, awareness of illusions is the condition for freedom and human action" (Fromm, 1962, p. 110). Marx indicates this as a reform of consciousness; I would declare it a birth of subjecthood. But not only is resistance needed to create subjecthood, the awaking of a consciousness that perceives the invisible pressure, which is domination, is also required. The process is one and the same, seeing the domination and developing resistance, then acting as a subject. Marx as quoted by Fromm (1962), "The reform of consciousness consists exclusively in the fact that one lets the world become aware of its consciousness, that one awakens the world from the dream it is dreaming about itself, that one interprets its own actions to the world….." (p. 111).

The above indicates that another way to depict this action of resistance is to locate the term of realized as resistance. To clearly see the invisible picture is the beginning of resistance. Freire (1985) called this *conscientization*, "the process in which people achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (p. 93).

The "aware-thinker" or realized thinker is paramount to understanding the idea of active citizenship. Another way that the thinker can achieve a positive freedom is to be imaginative. There is a need to imagine the possibilities of the future in order to see that there can be a difference, a change, a better world. Without imagination this cannot happen, a person's options are what has been told or revealed to him or her, not something that he or she has imagined for himself/ herself in subjecthood.

Democratic social imaginary

Charles Taylor (2007) describes social imaginary, where people imagine their social situations, stories and images that are carried, not just by one person, but by whole groups of people. "It incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life" (Taylor, 2007, p. 119). This imaginary is very important to be able to move collectively as a society. The idea of a public sphere would be included within this imaginary due to its ability to allow for shared or even amalgamated vision of meaning. Without this imaginary the collective whole of democracy would not function. These imaginaries are not static but change with time due to pressures and exposure to influence.

Democracies develop these imaginaries as they become democracies, so within the various democracies these imaginaries can be different (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) describes the imaginary of our current democracy as, "a framework in which individuals can be and act without unnecessary restrictions and without undue privilege to some over others and in conditions where they can make themselves heard" (p. 125). Sounds

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familiar to the American citizen, with the notion of little restrictions and no undue privilege; this negative freedom does not mention social justice, except in the idea that people need to be heard.

Taylor discusses that this imaginary, as mentioned in the section on consumerism, is being affected by power monopolies, corruption and media giants. This causes a disruption within the people's imagination because the citizen feels powerless to imagine their own future. There is the pressure that Giroux is discussing earlier in this section, the idea of the beginnings of resistance. The assault is due to the overwhelming addiction of the population to consumerism. It seems to be distorting a positive social imaginary and replacing it with something different based on consumptive worth (Korton, 2007).

The realized citizen has to be a thinker/ subject, has to have experienced resistance or understand resistance to move into positive freedom and also has to be able to imagine the process of democracy now and in the future.

Self-Governed

The term **self-governed** refers to the power of the human mind to control itself and not require an outside force to maintain order. The self-governed citizen does what is necessary to obey the laws and move toward a better possibility of the future. He does not need a militaristic framework to make him behave. The citizen motivates himself/ herself to learn for his/her mind, so that, as a citizen, there will be effectiveness. The citizen is physically active if possible to bring clarity to decision making. The key principle here is self: the citizen knows that there is responsibility for himself/ herself and

the rest of the citizenry. This responsibility is reflected by the way the person governs himself/ herself within the scope of society.

Positive freedom demands the action of self-government, to act upon the world as a citizen/ subject and influence the process of government. Fromm (1962) describes this action, "But we can emerge from this bondage and enlarge the realm of freedom hence of necessity by becoming fully aware of reality, and hence of necessity, by giving up illusions, and by **transforming ourselves** from somnambulistic, unfree, determined, dependent, passive persons into awakened, aware, active, independent ones"(p. 109). If one has practice governing oneself then the responsibility that is levied is not as great because every citizen is engaged in the process themselves. There is a collective management going on, fueled by a responsible social imaginary, funded by the thinking citizen.

The culmination of these concepts is the Collected Realized Self-Governed Citizen.

CONTEXT

When I first started teaching, I felt that I needed to give back to society, to show my support and demonstrate that one could benefit and use our systems to "have a good life". I accepted the ideas and foundations of what knowledge/ process did for the individual. I wanted the students to become good citizens of this democracy. I delved into the History Curriculum for high school thinking that the process of democracy was included. I got my first students; in an alternative setting and realized that there was no way just following this curriculum would affect a change on the students that was as

profound as the change I felt they could aspire to (Freire, 1974). The curriculum briefly describes the process but never practices it. As I taught this curriculum, I began to get concerned that the curriculum tended to look upon democracy from a distance as an observer and not an active participant in the process. The concern began to grow more profound, as I taught; I began to question the whole nature of schools themselves; at least schools set up the way that the public schools are assembled and "curricularized". What was missing? The student was missing; the schools seem to be just about the description of facts, and not the action of the students to make sense of these random disconnected facts. School was intense; it had high expectations but did not address the subjective needs of the students themselves. How were we going to create a democratic society if we as an institution could not begin to model the needs of the 21st Century citizen-student? The students never practiced the democracy they had learned, all description with no application.

School Setting

The school where I was employed was much more in tune with our students because of the limited number of students the school taught, and part of our mission was to help the students achieve individual success, the best way we saw fit. But even in this setting we were still confined by the state and county mandates, the confines of our funding and the patience of our teachers. Compared to a regular school setting, in which the task would be relatively impossible, we attempted to create a just, subjective, educational framework. From this perspective our school was successful, actually creating the realization of subjectivity in a few of our students.

These students left my classroom and were able to function with purpose in many formal settings without much trouble; they began to govern themselves. The students saw themselves differently. What did I do? I used the processes that I had read about, some therapeutic, some organizational, and many from my own personal experience, that could help a person begin to liberate their understanding of the world. I was successful, notably for my ability to reach kids that were unreachable. But all the time realizing that my teaching methods were not the usual methods: I did not have neat rows in my classroom, and it was messy and full of noise. I sometimes wondered if I am just playing a teacher, and not really teaching. What was I exactly teaching? Other teachers and administrators would come to my door and wonder what on earth I was doing with my students. My test scores were ok, but, by this time, I knew that I was on a much more important mission than "good history scores".

Process

The processes I used in the classroom varied with the students that I taught. Many of the processes had merit, but I could not place the positive movement on a particular process or processes. The foundational aspect for change seemed to be our classroom environment. What did this mean? I am just an ordinary guy, with some average students. Was my ability a philosophical aspect of my personality, our environment? Maybe it is a particular style of communication between the students and myself? Could it simply be my belief that each person is a citizen and in turn each citizen needs the tools to know themselves and therefore manage themselves and also maybe even society? Was the secret that I had the revelation of *their suppressed subjectivity*?

Did I see with their help a glimpse of where they could be given the tools and self esteem to make a change in their lives? All these questions and no definitive answers create a distinct internal frustration.

Graduate Study

Over the past several years in addition to my teaching, I have been involved in the study of education. During these years I have been exposed to the theories of many great thinkers and have actually met some that I feel have great insight into the mind and life of education. These thinkers have exposed me to the likes of Freire, Heidegger, Kant, Fromm, West and others that have changed the face of thought and education. I have searched over the course of this schooling for a philosophy or process that could describe me, or if you will, my style of teaching. I would have to say that for me the idea of liberation is key to my foundation, or the basic element of my style.

I could not locate from these external sources, what it was that I did? There were no foci outside myself that could be trusted to show me what I was feeling. The feelings that initiated all those questions over and over again: But how do I liberate my students' subjecthood and thus liberate the citizen within, consistently? What has to take place for a student to begin to control themselves and their lives? Also, within this liberatory pedagogy I had to walk a tightrope of institutional folly. How do I navigate this space within the confines of a public school and greater educational community? What are my concerns about the process of liberation?

To help answer these questions, I decided to go back to the intense teaching that I did several years ago at the high school level. If my consciousness was going to be

motivated, then I felt it would have to be in the middle of the discourse for the freedom of our collective democratic youth politic. The intensity of the work of a high school teacher should give me some clarity or see some connections and polarities that I would have missed just studying theories. **In particular I will seek to understand the process, principles and tensions of teaching citizenship and being a citizen, within a democracy as revealed in my own experience. Within this investigation emphasis will be placed on the teaching and/ or formation of self-regulation, subjecthood and the complex negotiations/ tensions that a subject/ teacher must make to distill the concrete breathing Collected Realized Self-governed Citizen.**

Once there is a degree of understanding these core practices and environments, that create the CRSC, then there will be a movement within the dissertation to form statements that could help public school teachers/ citizens navigate such actions and suggestions for further inquiry. The research will also attempt to help verify and assist if appropriate, the already functioning models of democratic schooling.

DESIGN

In order to understand the practice toward the functions of schooling and the democratic process, the remaining portions of this dissertation will be divided into two sections. The first section will consist of chapters that discuss two foundational movements within schooling that relate to the democratic process: liberatory/ critical pedagogy and the democratic schools movement. The last section's chapters will involve the autobiographical/ investigative process, which draws on Pinar's Currere method,

reveal some of the raw reflections that stem from experiences within a public school setting and then summarize the conclusions that result from the process (Pinar, 2000).

Foundation

The beginning research section consisting of two chapters will discuss liberatory/ critical pedagogy and the democratic schools movement. A survey of these concepts/ movements is necessary to recognize domination and understand the essence of democratic possibilities within the teaching experience. These two chapters will also lead to the creation of an appropriate research background that will address issues concerning liberation, democracy and citizenship.

Chapter Two will discuss liberatory/ critical pedagogy, a brief history, some practices and indicators that entail its use. Chapter Three will discuss the democratic schools movement and how it helps to create a democratic citizen through the practice of an active modeled/ taught democratic collective. These chapters should provide an epistemological foundation from which to question/ compare the findings from the selected reflective journals that address liberatory ideas and practices within the school settings. Inquiries such as the following could be collected from these foundational chapters on liberatory/ critical pedagogy and sifted through the autobiographical process:

❖ What are the tensions between authority, control and democracy in the classroom?

❖ Where is the locus of my libratory connection to the student within the educational experience?

❖ When does teaching become therapy?

❖ How is this kind of classroom received by the administration or other teachers?

❖ Is the classroom a place that should raise dangerous or controversial issues?

❖ How does the official curriculum play a role in liberatory/ critical pedagogy?

❖ What is my motivation for such a study?

Critical Reflective Process

The following research section consisting of two chapters will facilitate the reflective process, provide examples of the raw journal material, and reveal the results of comparing and contrasting the reflections sifted through the research design to the foundational concepts previously discussed. These concepts should enable the reader to understand the complexity and tensions associated with trying to practice/ model liberatory pedagogy in the modern classroom. The rich narrative description within the journals should put a complex human experience upon the more abstract theoretical concepts discussed in the previous two chapters, concepts such as domination, suffering, justice and liberation. The hope is that this dissertation will locate these struggles as uniquely human, lived and coped by the teachers, students and staff of any classroom and/ or democratic practice.

The nuances of liberatory/ critital pedagogy will be teased out of the reflective journals with the autobiographical process known as Currere (Pinar, 2000). Chapter Four will engage in the process of Currere as well as document a portion of the raw reflections themselves. The autobiography will reveal marked areas of interest that could be investigated using the foundational principles (i.e. democracy/ liberation) discussed in the previous chapters. The Currere process also allows the direct experience to be interrogated through the autobiographical reflective processes (Pinar, 1998).

The final chapter will re-reflect on the original experiential journals, lead by the research process and compare/ contrast the findings to the indicators from the foundational discussions of liberatory/ critical pedagogy and the democratic schools movement. Thus, Chapter Five will be the culmination of the reflective process that will prompt a new and final reflection, noted from addressing the autobiographical insights, then comparing/ merging the new focused reflection to the foundational concepts. The "final" composite reflection created from the Currere process will purify/ expose experiences of teaching, thinking, and the tensions, which are produced in the attempt to create an active democratic critical collective within the classroom. The final reflection can then be compared to the previous defined ideal of the Collected Realized Self-Governed Citizen to form a conclusion about public school teaching, pitfalls, ideas of democratic possibilities and suggestions to further research.

It is the intention, that this dissertation explores the true meaning of Praxis within the pedagogical experience and in doing so provide hope and future exploration by others.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

> Our attempt at democracy, already strongly marked by our lack of experience in
> self-government, was thus further threatened by the difficulties of finding our way
> from the prevailing state of naïve consciousness to some understanding of the
> significance of the rapid changes in society (Freire, 1974, p. 31).

> Once one knows how to ask, the answer becomes irrelevant (Zyngier & Fialho
> 2010, p. 29).

A discussion of critical pedagogy has been included within this dissertation

because of the importance of critical thought to the democratic process. It is this

author's contention, as described in chapter one, that democracy is on the wane. Critical

thought, which is a cornerstone of the democratic process, seems out of place with the

operations of our nation's political system. Despite concerns regarding the functionality

of democracy the founding fathers demanded that citizens be afforded liberty and the

pursuit of happiness. Both of these founding sentiments require an ability to engage in

critical thought to identify oppression and provide a foundation for the designs of liberty

and happiness. Critical pedagogy as a learned process has the ability to disrupt the

functions of domination and in so doing, create a clearing from which to view one's

experience as new: the essence of liberatory thought. From this new thought perspective

the scholar/ student can perceive new designs and summits from which to know the

world.

The inclusion of critical pedagogy within the scope of this research is intended to provide two functions. The first is to understand the ideas of a pedagogy that enables the learner to break free from personal and social domination. The second is to explain to the reader how the process is enacted and provide an example of the workings of this style of pedagogy. It is important for the reader to understand the process so they will see the connection to the research methods described in Chapter Four.

Description

The recent overall trends in critical pedagogy have taken two paths. The two forms are critical multiculturalism and classroom method. Critical multiculturalism is connected to teachers such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, while the classroom method is generally associated with teachers like Ira Shor (Pippen, 1998). The primary difference between these two themes is their perspective. Critical multiculturalism interrogates from a distance, the theories and institutions that create domination, and then provides theoretical resources on the subject. The classroom method is directly practiced on students within the K-12 classroom, attempting to directly establish a discourse that creates critical thought. Sometimes called "border pedagogy," the two forms can overlap and are not exclusive or inclusive as Critical Pedagogy has a very pluralist nature, with many different nuances and sub-variations (Kincheloe, 2008, Pippin, 2000).

In order to better understand the dimensions of liberatory/ critical pedagogy in the short confines of this chapter and to further stimulate the use of it within the reflection process, the chapter will be split into three segments. The first segment will discuss a focused description of liberatory/ critical pedagogy. Also, included in this segment will

be a sketch of the tenets of Freireian critical pedagogy. This description will give the

research a critical foundation from which to frame the discussion. The second segment

will discuss hegemonic markers that indicate the need for critical thought. The

description of these markers will enable the researcher and reader to mark the journal

where it can be reflected against itself and the democratic process. The third segment

will detail the dialectical process that creates critical thought within the classroom. The

description of the classroom process will enable the reader to see the method, how the

"clearing" can be formed not just for this research, but also for use by the reader. The

process that is mentioned is by no means the only characteristics of Liberatory/ critical

Pedagogy, but is the one that was chosen to address the concerns of this research.

Foundations

Liberatory pedagogy is a synonym of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy

originated as a division of critical theory that began at the Institute of Social Research at

the University of Frankfurt also known as the Frankfurt School. The scholars at the

Frankfurt School were involved in research about relations of power, domination and

society. The ideas of critical theory are not unified but form a loosely representational

construct that tries to determine and deconstruct oppression by any social theory that is

appropriate to the task at hand. The ideas of Kant, Weber, Hegel, Marx, and others were

the backbone of the instruments used to form their various critical discourses on society

(Kincheloe, 2008).

These critical scholars helped fuel a rising tide of criticism of capitalism and the

functions of the institutions of society that reinforced the capitalist classist hierarchal

structure or "status quo". Kincheloe (2008) agrees stating, "Critical theory retains its ability to disrupt and challenge the status quo" (p. 46). Within their various discourses these scholars were able to stimulate thought that challenged the notion that the capitalist structure was inherently "good" for mankind. The theories disseminated through academia and found a seat in the radical movements of the 1960s in the United States. The civil rights and anti-war movements proved fertile ground for the use of critical theory within their own evolving constructs. Critical Pedagogy is built upon the discourse of critical theory but moves forward to express concerns about knowledge production, freedom, democracy and cultural studies.

Critical pedagogy is concerned with teaching and exploring using critical insight that filters the lived experience. Critical theory provides the critical pedagogue with the tools to interrogate democracy and institutions, especially education, within the lived experience and framework of social constructs. Peter McLaren states that, "Critical pedagogy has served as a form of struggle within and against the social norms and forces that structure the schooling process" (Sardoc, 2001, p. 423). This enables the critical pedagogue to give voice to concerns of injustice that stem from seemingly democratic structures such as schools. Kincheloe (2008) adds that, "Proponents of an evolving critical pedagogy possess a variety of tools to expose such oppressive power politics" (p. 50).

The major functions of Critical Pedagogy are: to unpack the idea of oppression, to create a critical consciousness within groups and especially within the individual, to create an emancipatory ethic, to reject any type of scientific positivism, and to break from

the immanence of any one domain of research. These discourses are by no means

complete and merely serve as a beginning point to the understanding of Critical

Pedagogy (Pippen, 2000).

Oppressed

The dominated or oppressed group of people that critical pedagogy attempts to

address does not know in most cases that they are being dominated. In general, the

dominated are under the assumption that it is their "own" doing or a manifestation of an

unalterable reality. "Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the

'order' which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized"

(Freire, 1970, p. 62). The purpose of this pedagogy is for the educator to help the

students reveal in their own lives their "freedom of possibility".

Critical Pedagogy

The educator considered to be one of the founders of the current interpretation of

Critical Pedagogy is Paulo Freire. "With Freire, the notion of critical pedagogy as we

understand it today emerges" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 69). Freire was a Brazilian educator

who began systemic change in Brazil through his work with literacy. His seminal work,

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, provides an overview of his concerns and theories. Freire

calls into question our entire process of formal schooling as a banking system that treats

the learner as an object to be filled. "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition,

not transferrals of information" (Freire, 1970, p. 79). The system in question Freire

describes is about maintaining the oppression of the oppressors rather than truly

educating the person. "He used a Marxist paradigm about the class struggle and

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questioning the capitalist system and the dominant powers. The educational model

begins with the knowledge of the students and the praxis of dialogue from the bottom up"

(Pippin, 2000, p. 178). The only way for the oppressed to be liberated is for them to see

themselves as subjects that can influence their world. The students/ oppressed must

figure out, with subtle guidance, that they are oppressed and involve themselves in group

action to overcome. "It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become

involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in

themselves" (Freire, 1970, p. 64). Freire understands that people who are oppressed

know that there is something wrong but until they come to know themselves as masters

of their own production they cannot be free. The freedom happens from their praxis.

Praxis is the merging of theory and action, a conscious experience to facilitate change

(Freire, 1970). The overall concept of critical pedagogy is to make the situation available

that allows the student to experience their own reflected awareness. Once the student sees

himself situated within a system of domination, the reaction of this cultural awareness

creates a sense of resistance, then subjecthood. From the subject perspective there is a

seeking or yearning for social justice, yielding the motivation for systematic change.

For example Zyngier and Fialho (2010) describe the process using literary texts:

We may call the first moment reaction, a personal, non-transferable emotional
experience. It requires the physical act of reading, the perception, decodifying
and relating the signals on the page and involves the immediate emotional
reaction and the first non-formal, verbalized (or not) impressions (e.g. laughter,
curiosity, anxiety). The second moment is that of awareness itself, which depends
on observation and respective reading, when the reader starts to take into account
which aspects of the text caused his or her reaction. The third moment can be
identified with the formalizing of textual interpretation. Here the reader perceives
the text under study as a part of a wider system where history, ideologies, literary

tradition, conventions and so on are at work. At this stage, readers may resort to this knowledge to substantiate their interpretations. A fourth moment is that of creation, when students play with language in order to produce their own literary pieces (p. 15)

These stages are not finite and can be fluid depending on the reflective moment that is being interrogated. The stages can and should happen over and over again as each person reflects upon their lived experiences (Freire, 1974). Most of the current literature on critical pedagogy processes follows similar stages.

The pivotal movement in critical pedagogy is cultural awareness. It is the original space where the student and teacher come together to begin to view the world critically.

Cultural awareness

The importance of cultural awareness for the citizens in a democracy cannot be underestimated. The basis of a body politic has to be considered as a constituent of the members itself, its own culture. If one is not a "free thinking member" or does not see themselves as a member, they are powerless to influence the politic. "The principle task of a modern and democratic political philosophy is precisely the articulation of individual and political liberty, for it is there that the question of pluralistic and democratic citizenship is rooted" (Mouffe, 1993, p. 38).

Freire (1970) discovered how cultural awareness can be stimulated, while trying to teach illiterate peasants how to read in Brazil. He noted that when they saw themselves as people, immersed in culture, like the people in power, that they were not destined to be a subordinate class, they became very interested in learning how to read. Once they could read they began to see that they could mobilize and create change within

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their world, thus becoming revolutionaries. "The oppressed have been destroyed precisely because their situation has reduced them to things. In order to regain their humanity they must cease to be things and fight as men and women" (Freire, 1970, p. 68).

With this process Freire and other critical pedagogues that followed were changing the very notion of teaching. Teaching was not just to give your students new information it was to help them begin to perceive the world around them, in a "wide-open" fashion. Maxine Greene (1988) terms this "wide-awakeness", when one can see themselves within possibility (p. 23). With Freire, teaching was an act of togetherness a way to see the world. As the student sees themselves, they see the structures of systems that are producing oppression. McLaren describes it as, "…disturbing the foundations upon which bourgeois knowledge is built.." , thus creating questions about the nature of societies and the institutions that support them, such as education (Sardoc, 2001, p. 423). By looking at concepts and situations critically the educator and students through dialogue frame the knowledge to see the world differently. "Freire's method is one of dialogue, which speaks to an emancipatory educational process, committed, above all, to the empowerment of students" (Zyngier & Fialho, 2010, p. 17). The process of dialectics brings about the praxis of critical pedagogy.

Dialectical Process

The process of awareness Freire describes has its root in the dialogue, and discourse between members of a body, or group of learners. The learners have to see the information being produced by their co-learners, as they see their co-learners' knowledge

production, they make reflective inferences upon how their own knowledge is produced. Giroux (1992) describes this process as "a form of cultural production ….implicated in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values and social practices" (p. 3). What Giroux is saying is, as the members/ students view and discuss these concepts, they see themselves within them. They see that they are individuals but explicitly linked to the contextual situations of their lives. Does this make dialogue indispensible to critical thought? Is dialogue important to democracy? Is true dialogue offered in schools? How can students and citizens understand the issues of governing themselves if there is no critical dialogue? Could the dialogue be where the non-violent struggle takes place? Freire elaborates:

> For example, I think that in the process of struggle we spoke about before- not necessarily with guns, but the struggle because of differences in the antagonist's interests—there is a qualitative difference when the leaders of the working class discover something that is very obvious, that is, that the education that the dominant classes offer to the working class is the education that reproduces the working class as such (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 212-213)

Wide awake

Many students, not just students from low-income areas, seem to be devoid of this form of critical awareness. Without critical questioning habits, students are likely just to follow along and never interrogate the resistance that they feel. These students just go to school, come home, watch TV, and never understand that they are being manipulated, or forced mentally to perceive the world a certain way. Shapiro (2006) relates:

> Human beings are just as likely to develop into beings that act out of a habitual adherence to what has gone on before, or an unreflective acceptance of authority,

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than as people who ask why we should be expected to believe what is presented to us by those holding privilege or power (p. 105).

Culture as a realm of the dominant and repressed society is a domain that must be reflected upon, through dialectical process. Not just the schools as systems of power, but the nature of the power relations within society itself. Henry Giroux is the one of the foremost critical pedagogues, insisting on this reflection. He refined the scope of critical pedagogy and the political to place them in the orbit of cultural studies "The political domain in the critical theoretical tradition moves into both everyday social relations and the realm of consciousness and psyche" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 78). Therefore it is necessary to invest in cultural studies and critique of the popular media as a pedagogical force, creating an invaluable understanding of the workings of a modern day classroom.

Dialectics is the questioning strategy used to unpack these various background practices or cultural domains and bring to the surface the underlying intention behind the seemingly "normal" activity. Cultural studies are the process by which the everyday order is interrogated and dialectically questioned for underlying intention and relevance. Freire questioned the order of the everyday with peasants. They concluded they were peasants because someone was making money off their backs; the people who owned the land where they worked (Freire, 1970). The questions that arise from this process are couched in the measures of the marketplace.

In order for students/ citizens to begin this dialectical process, to be aware of this occurrence, this cultural domination, they have to perceive something new, to be exposed to a type of experience. They have to be prompted to question, converse and understand

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each other. Freire terms this a rupture (Freire, 1990). Rupture begins the dialectical process.

Rupture

Rupture is the process by which the instructor, through the use of images, questions, and situations linked with dialogue, dislodges culture from the abstract to make it personal. Once the idea of culture is personal, it can be manipulated and understood by the individual student. This process can occur, directly as with Freire and his experience with the peasant farmers, or indirectly. The following description shows how rupture can progress through an indirect, subtle means.

Before the civil rights movement in the United States a type of domination was occurring. The democratic citizens of the South thought it was appropriate for two races to be publicly separated. Facilities that were available to one group were not available to the other. There were many excuses used, such as "the Bible said so", or "they want to live that way". Most people just went about their daily lives and never questioned the fact that they were being controlled, made to do something that they would not necessarily think was "right". Freire calls this the, "bureaucratization of the mind" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 37). So until this "norm" was ruptured by dialogue it would continue.

While Freire was making inroads into the education of Brazilian peasants there was an American doing similar work but with a different style. Myles Horton began an educational center in the mountains of Tennessee. Miles too saw that education was the

key, but not the formalized education that was necessarily coming out of the segregated school system.

Horton, describes this phenomenon, "I just think that most people can't think outside of the socially approved way of doing things and consequently don't open up their minds to making any kind of discoveries" (Freire & Horton, 1990, p. 44). The Highlander School was about making those discoveries, creating those spaces from which to question, no topic was taboo. Segregation was one of those issues that were addressed actually by not acknowledging it. There was no segregation at Highlander, when it would have been expected. The subtle rupture occurred when people of all races realized that they were working together side-by-side, integrated, without a mention made of it. Horton describes it as just letting it happen. The Highland Center was a place for people to meet to take classes and seek guidance on social issues and community organizing. The students came there to learn how to organize, they left knowing that segregation was wrong, because all the races worked well together. If the races worked together well at Highlander, then it could happen anywhere. The rupture was systematic ignoring the policy of segregation (Horton & Freire, 1990).

A rupture can also be imposed directly with questions, literature, pictures, art, drama any type of cultural stimulus that can be interrogated by a group of people interested in understanding the essence of what is being disseminated within such codified practices.

Praxis

Once this rupture has occurred, it is very important to take the language of practice, the everyday language, and move it toward the language of theory, the essence of praxis. These systematic statements of principles allow the user to make sense out of seemingly chaotic events and facts (Webster's, 2010). Lam (2008) reiterates this finding, "Although these experiences may serve as a point of entry into social analysis, it is imperative that educators make attempts to move students from the language of practice to the language of theory" (p. 13). The general consensus of moving toward theory gives a distinct language and framework to their protest. The theoretical language to include notions of classism/ Marxism, critical race theory, feminist theory, and/or queer theory, can provide a platform from which to broaden not just the epistemological base of the discussion taking place, but through writing, the entire epistemological foundation of cultural knowledge.

The inclusion of theoretical language gives the learner and teacher a critical foundation from which to interrogate their new practical findings. As the learner begins to understand and experience the learning of new theoretical knowledge they begin to know themselves and their context with greater clarity (Lam, 2008). The concept of critical pedagogy is not just a feel good method to get students interested in the subject matter. It is a concrete interrogation of cultural construction through a theoretical lens. As stated by Moraes (2005) discussing McLaren:

> McLaren has clearly and rightly argued that critical pedagogy should not be understood as a "boutique" of superficial forms of democratic classroom arrangements, such as discussion circles, teachers serving as facilitators, and so

on. These perspectives, according to McLaren, deny the view that in critical pedagogy teachers and students are engaged in a historical discussion of social struggles. Critical Pedagogy, as perceived by McLaren, constitutes a dialectical and dialogical process that engages teachers and students in re-framing, re-functioning and re-posing the question of understanding itself (p. 97).

The teacher has to be moving in his/ her praxis as well as the students. Freire (1998) puts this straightforward assertion, "I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I Intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself" (p. 35). Freire describes the essence of praxis.

In using theoretical language the teacher and the student can name the marker that is causing them to question. They can then through theory begin to interrogate the practice of domination that is in question. The praxis is created by constantly interrogating meanings, in a cyclical learning process. As the learning theorists Davis, Sumera, et al (2000) describe:

> Knowledge is contingent, contextual, and evolving; never absolute, universal, or fixed. Learning is this sense, is more a reaching out that a taking in. It is a participation. It is a process of remembering—in the word's original sense of pulling together the parts of a body into a more complex unity. That is, even though it is often convenient to speak of an agent's knowledge as though it resided within the agent, that knowledge is what defines the agents relationship with the rest of the world. The agents' activity and identity are inseparable from his, her, or its knowledge. Knowing is doing is being (p. 78).

Once the dialectical process, has moved forward, the learner is taking in all of the facets of the process and creating new knowledge. The new knowledge created places the student in the picture, knowing that his/ her participation/ doing can alter the

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construct of personal reality. The student becomes forever changed within, from their own participation.

Teacher hierarchy vs. freedom

Dialogue participation disrupts the power structure of the typical classroom. Although teachers still have to have some control over the questions and steer the classroom toward the theoretical perspective, there is a de-centering of power relations. As Freire (1974) states, "The role of the educator is not to fill the educatee with knowledge, technical or otherwise. It is rather an attempt to move toward a new way of thinking in both the educator and the educatee, through the dialogical relationship between both. The flow is in both directions" (p. 112). There is not a domination of one member of the group over the other, but a fluid pressure toward a common goal, construction of new participatory knowledge. The teacher's role is one of direction more than content. He/ she keep the process moving challenging and questioning the group's assumptions.

The teacher is not a fact giver or filler, but another citizen on a journey of critical understanding. That does not mean that the teacher in Freire's opinion gives away total control of the class and allows the discussion to move toward mundane resolutions. According to Freire the teacher still maintains the ability to push the theoretical envelope and challenged the assumptions of the group (Freire, 1972). Most critical pedagogues feel that it is their responsibility to create critical conflict and involvement in their classrooms. As Giroux (2006) understands critical classroom teacher as, "……developing modes of pedagogical practice in which teachers and students become

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critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change" (p. 186).

In order for the process of dialectics to occur the teacher must comprehend that the student's background knowledge they bring to the classroom, their practical/ experiential knowledge, is valuable. The value is not just in the fact that the participatory knowledge is useful to the discussion. The value exists in the space, where the student can reference from and comment to, a space where they can have their curiosity peaked, and be an expert.

Ingenious curiosity

When the students come into class they bring with them the experience of their lives, a valuable knowledge. This experience is a tool in the process of critical pedagogy. "To think correctly from the teachers point of view, implies respect for common sense….." (Freire, 1998, p. 36). What Freire is discussing here is respect for the knowledge of the students. Many times termed **common sense** knowledge, this understanding can provide the initial impetus for greater investigation of a topic (Freire, 1998). Teachers in the critical pedagogues view should make a bridge between, this common sense knowledge and the theoretical understandings they would like the students to learn. This process creates relevance in the minds of the students.

> We cannot educate if we don't start—and I said start and not stay—from the levels in which the people perceive themselves, their relationships with the others and with reality, because this is precisely what makes their knowledge. In order for one to know, it's just necessary to be alive, then people know. The question is to know what they know and how they know, to learn how to teach them things which they don't know and they want to know (Freire & Horton, 1990, p. 66).

From the foundations of their own ingenious curiosity the teacher can make connections and create a more foundational curiosity, epistemological. The student moves from ingenious curiosity to epistemological curiosity creating a learning, thinking subject. As Freire says about this process, "….touch their memory about a subject and remake the road" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 173).

Teachers have to remind them of this fact over and over again that student's knowledge has value and context, from here the learning can begin. Lam (2008) reiterates: "I was reminded that students come to the classroom with specific histories and therefore I need to be willing to meet the students where they are located in relation to their own learning and political development" (p. 14). The teacher bridges between the two knowledge structures and both the teacher and the student learn something new. Both students and teachers are journeymen/ women in the learning process, risking failure, misunderstanding and understanding. The movement into the unknown is impossible without risk (Greene, 1998).

Risk

To make epistemological curiosity happen requires a certain amount of risk from both parties. In order for the process to happen fully, the subject must be able to criticize him/her self. It is a huge risk to interrogate your own cultural constructions. The risk is located in the positionality or involvement in the narrative that is being challenged. It is dangerous to challenge these constructions, because once challenged then one can feel the call of creative action -- the call to change. But risk is a necessary function in the process of critical pedagogy. Freire explains, "In criticizing itself, ingenuous curiosity

becomes "epistemological curiosity," as through greater methodological exactitude it

appropriates the object of its knowing" (Freire, 1998, p. 37). What Freire is alluding to is

that when you take control of your thinking, you become a subject. After this process the

student sees the world as something that can be changed with his own endeavor, the

unmistakable feeling of possibility. Risk is an unavoidable part of subjecthood. "We are

afraid of risking. And it is impossible, just impossible to create without risking" (Horton

& Freire, 1990).

Unfinished

According to critical pedagogy the journey of understanding is never complete.

There is never a final act for the learner, there are always more concepts to know, the

construction of knowledge is never complete. As the learner and teacher reflect on the

concepts they are discussing the subject is always considered open-ended, never

complete, always ranging on the impossible that can be made possible. Freire (1998)

expands, "This permanent movement of searching creates a capacity for learning not only

in order to adapt to the world but especially to intervene, to re-create and to transform it"

(p. 66). From a vantage point of unfinishedness one can act on the world through

various, talents and constitute a totally new and different world all the time knowing that

there is always something more.

> However I hold that my own unity and identity, in regard to others and to the
> world, constitutes my essential and irrepeatable way of experiencing myself as a
> cultural, historical and unfinished being in the world, simultaneously conscious of
> my un-finishedness (Freire, 1998, p. 51).

Thus learning is an unsolved mystery always, a step into the unknown, by the future of the known. The possibility of subjecthood rests in the fact that is reality is not static and there is always something to find. The search never ends, for every new answer creates new questions, and in turn creates new subjects. The unfinished subject is always in the process of becoming, of knowing the freedom to become (hooks, 1994).

Hegemonic Critical Markers

The background forces that are critically questioned in the processes of critical pedagogy as mentioned by Antonio Gramsci in his prison notebooks are termed **cultural hegemony**. "The central message of Gramsci is that the organization of culture is 'organic' to the dominant power" (Monasta, 2000, p. 4). These invisible forces maintain control of society with just a small amount of energy cast downward from the ruling class around the members of society. Greene (1988) elaborates, "Hegemony, as explained by the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, means direction by moral and intellectual persuasion, not by physical coercion" (p. 133). The "organic intellectual" is not just your teacher, it can be anyone or group in society that has a greater social organization and power. These organic intellectuals are far from neutral and form the political force needed to sway society to their understandings (Monasta, 2000). Their force becomes a sublime undercurrent, a rational for domination and domestication. "Educators and parents will have to come to view knowledge as neither neutral nor objective and, instead view it as a social construction embodying particular interests and assumptions" (Giroux, 1988, p. 7).

The social scientists interested in critical pedagogy have a fundamental understanding of the workings of power in the culture, from classism, to racism, there are many such dominating social arrangements that disrupt the process of democracy. Within their writings this researcher has noticed indicators or hegemonic constructs that spark critical curiosity. These indicators provide a place where an action is noted that is either antithetical to democratic thought or creates concerns about its nature/ purpose.

In order to better understand spaces of domination within the reflective process of this dissertation some of the distressed areas where critical pedagogy should be applied are described and termed critical hegemonic markers. The purpose of these markers will enable this researcher to identify an area within the raw journaling that should be reflected upon. This section will describe some of the characteristics of those markers.

The markers described are sub-domains of the idea of **scientific positivism** which dominates much of the popular educational discourse. Based on the ideas of Francis Bacon and other empiricists, reified by August Comte, the theory states that all knowledge that holds value has to be empirically verifiable by observation, therefore having a "positive" or factual origin. "He (Bacon) proposed that knowledge could only be positively obtained by a gradual ascent from the observable particularities of an event or substance to the general level of theory, otherwise known as the inductive method" (Steele, 2002, p. 400). In positivists opinion only knowledge gained using the scientific method is valid. Knowledge such as intuition has no valid properties, other than to warrant an investigation using a positive means. Once the scientific observations are made then the results are generalized into the population, creating discernable patterns

that cover all peoples and situations (Steele, 2002, Ferguson, 2000). This foundational premise popularized by our current education system/ society has raised alarms from the critical educational community.

The critical hegemonic markers by no means interrogate the entire gambit of critical scholarship concerns. The markers are mainly associated with the experiential background of my particular school setting or in areas that influence my teaching/ schooling.

All the markers described are inclined to denote where a person is being manipulated like an object. The use of the hegemonic force is intended to remove the subjective bent that a person has to control his/her own life, a subtle manipulation producing external dominance. "Hegemony in this account represents more that the exercise of coercion: it is a process of continuous creation and includes the constant structuring of consciousness as well as a battle for the control of consciousness" (Giroux, 2006, p. 21). The reason why this is so important to critical pedagogy is that once a person is objectified then they can be controlled with or without their consent.

Neutrality

The first marker that will be address is the "supposed" neutrality within the classroom. According to many critical scholars there is never neutrality in the classroom. All teaching is political (Freire, 1970, Giroux, 1983, Kincheloe, 2008). The notion of neutrality presupposes that, in order for one to be neutral, one must have adhered to the status quo. Critical scholars claim that the status quo has its own sets of ideas about what is considered correct within the teaching profession. For example, if one was to mention

poverty in the classroom, there are assumptions about poverty inherent in the status quo that if questioned too vigorously would be met with disapproval by the county administration. The assumption of standardized tests as a useful teaching tool would, if questioned too vigorously by a teacher in a classroom, create a negative reaction from the administration.

For example, standardized tests are suspect in critical theory because they assume many different non-neutral foundations. The first of course being that the knowledge they test is factual or even objectively correct. This is not a neutral subject, but the knowledge and process of standardized testing is loaded with bias for the status quo of scientific positivism. If one were to tell students to write on their tests: this knowledge and test is not democratic, one would not have a job teaching for very long (Gatto, 2009, Giroux, 2006).

Objectivity

This topic moves right into another marker which is objectivity. Objectivity has long been the watchword of the scientific age. It is assumed that one can create an experiment in which the results are completely independent of the scientist. Critical pedagogy calls any objectivity into question that does not take into account the notion of interpretation by the recorder or viewer (Kincheloe, 2008).

There are many social scientific claims made under this guise that a critical researcher would have questions about.

Standardization

The foundation of standardization is an easy one for the average teacher to accept. The problem with this marker is (who is deciding) what the standard should be. One of the most common is Standard English. When we accept that only Standard English should be the spoken language, what other rich traditions are we suppressing? What power structures are we accepting?

bell hooks (1994) mentions the problem of objective language:

> An unbroken connection exists between the broken English of the displaced, enslaved African and the diverse black vernacular speech black folks use today. In both cases, the rupture of Standard English enabled and enables rebellion and resistance. By transforming the oppressor's language, making a culture of resistance, black people created an intimate speech they could say far more than was permissible within the boundaries of stand English (p. 171)

What should a student learn? It seems that this is the foundational question in educational standards. Not the more functional questions: Why should they learn it? The lack of the "why" question that is not asked by educators leaves the original question open for decision. Most of these questions are answered by industry and not by people who work in education. Why?

High stakes testing

The examination has since the beginning of modernism been an exacting means of discipline on the population. Its function of defining normalcy or mastery or any of the other designations of the power discourse. "It does this not by crushing them or lecturing them, but by humble procedures of training and distribution. It operates through a combination of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment. These

combine into a central technique of disciplinary power: the examination" (Dreyfus, 1982, p.156).

Normalcy

One of the most functioning markers of hegemony is normalcy. The concept of normalcy crops up over and over again in school literature. Normalcy is steeped in the standards of the dominant culture and anything that does not meet the dominant cultures definition is considered deviant. Once declared deviant the subjects of this dominance may be further be controlled by any means necessary. In our modern day culture advertising and the schools control what is considered normal (Degraff, 2005). Teachers must enforce these strict codes many times limiting creativity, just to keep their jobs. Tracking reinforces modes of behavior that lead to a normalizing function of the system. "The tracking at issue here is developed in its most subtle form through an endless series of school electives that appear to legitimate the cultures of subordinate groups while actually incorporating them in a trivial pedagogical fashion" (Giroux, 1988, p. 94). His tacit assumption that education is used for a political aim enables Giroux to see into classical education and question its course.

The problem with the idea of normalcy is that it is not a static concept. It vacillates with the various peoples that sustain culture. But in our society it seems to be made apart from a general decision or census of the population. "The important decisions are made today apart from the domains of ordinary understandings, shared values, consensual norms, and certainly apart from the language of everyday life" (Greene, 1988, p. 54). Culture is dominated by a small group of posivitivistic-

intellectuals backed by moneyed peoples. This small group tries to regulate society into their model of efficiency and correctness that stimulates society into thinking that this is the norm (Greene, 1988). "When oppression or exploitation or segregation or neglect is perceived as natural or a given there is little stirring in the name of freedom…" (Greene, 1988, p. 9).

Hidden curriculum

School rules can be examples of a normalizing hegemonic function. Many school rules can be shown to address a subordinate culture, emphasizing the dominance of the other. Bell schedules, tardy policies and other forms of control are used to keep the students in line. The logic is that the less movement, the less time students can get into trouble or resist the institutional structure. There is also a logic that stems from industrialism that movement is controlled in the factories therefore it should be controlled in the schools to provide practice for organized work. Dreyfus (1982) discussing Foucault describes this function, "Consequently, all of the space within a confined area must be ordered; there should be no waste, no gaps, no free margins; nothing should escape" (p. 155). If you have ever heard administrators talk about movement in a school you will hear this language.

Discipline is used in its various forms to enforce the hidden structure of the school. "Discipline proceeds by the organization of individuals in space, and it therefore requires a specific enclosure of space" (Dreyfus, 1982, p. 152). Discipline creates specific boundaries within the person subject to it, and then it becomes their foundation of normalcy.

Even students who long for liberatory education, who appreciate it, find themselves resisting because they have to go to other classes where the class begins at a certain time, ends at a certain time, where all these regulations are in place as modes of expression of power, rather than what needs to be done to have some sense of possibility for sustained conversation (hooks, 1994, p. 146).

Liberation Process

In order to get students to begin to see themselves within their own subjecthood the teacher can employ some basic functions or process to liberate thinking. These processes are not complete because in all cases they require a part of the student. They do not just require the student to do an activity because in order for the liberating function to happen the student must be part of the process. The student is not just doing the activity -- they become the activity. The liberation of their subjecthood takes them with it.

The process creates a new student. Because the overall effect liberates one's thinking from one place to another. In many cases a whole new world is opened up to the student. They see things with different meanings and purposes. Once the liberation has taken effect, one is changed. The student has experienced this situation and by experiencing it, it changed him/her (Dreyfus, 2008).

Most of the time the process of subjectifcation can be profound and open many paths to self directed student learning but many times it takes multiple efforts over a period to reach. Freire (1970) calls this conscientization, "….by means of which the people, through a true praxis, leave behind the status of objects to assume the status of subjects—is necessary" (p. 160). Once this liberating change has occurred the continuing

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effort to maintain ones liberation is constant. The forces of domination can change and

adapt to the challenges it perceives that threaten the dominant power (Freire, 1970).

An example of such a dominant response is the cultural course of rap music.

When rap music first came out it talked about oppression, hunger and pain. It was

considered dangerous by the mainstream media. Only gangsters and thugs listened to it -

- dangerous people. Listening to rap music could make your teens dangerous. This was

some of the rhetoric that was said about it. Then the music was commodified and now it

speaks with a consumerist bent, rarely ever challenging the status quo. Rap music as a

social commentary was silenced.

There are several means of creating the education space needed to stimulate the

subject response. The techniques are all open ended and because of that they have

unpredictable results and are difficult to measure. The process could be cathartic or take

months. There is no time schedule or an exact method. Critical pedagogy can be an

organic process; create the space, and things will happen.

Myles Horton describes his organic process at Highlander:

> I was looking for a process of how to relate to the people. Finally lightening
> struck. Finally, it just became very clear that I would never find what I was
> looking for. I was trying the wrong approach. The thing to do was just find a
> place move in and start and let it grow. It took me, let's see, about six years from
> the time I got interested. I was a slow learner to find out that I didn't need to
> know; I just needed to have a vision and that I shouldn't know. You should let
> the situation develop. And of course you've got to use anything that you learned
> in the process (Freire & Horton, 1990, p. 53).

The process is not always structured and can come about in the essence of dialog

about a concern or understanding. The critical process is sloppy and not always

empirically verifiable, but the teacher most of the time, will know it has happened and in time, everyone in contact with the student. Horton called this "bootleg" education.

Freireian Method

The method Freire used was to create a visual codification that the students could then decode with guidance from the teacher creating a new understanding. The codifications do not have to be visual; a story could be used to bring about the same effect. Freire was working with illiterate peasants so the visual stimulus was the most effective. These codifications are designed to link the ingenuous knowledge of the learner to the stimulus that needs to be learned (Freire, 1970 & 2003). The codifications are designed to stimulate the learner into thought.

Before the codifications are selected or created the educator must go into the community of the learners whom they want to teach and research. The first step according to Freire is to find a "generative theme" that concerns or has meaning for the prospective educational group. The investigators set up meetings where they can discuss what they want to accomplish in the area. This first informal meeting is to give the reasons for their presence to the prospective group. In the meeting they give a sketch of how the group will be led and the parameters of the group study and their rational for the study. This part is very important because the group that is being sought must trust the investigators. Without trust the group will not function as an educative unit. If there is a consensus then the investigation can continue. The process will require people from the area to assist in the initial data collection. The presence of these volunteers allows the process to have some relevance and connection to the community (Freire, 1970).

During the investigation time the teachers begin visits to the area, casually mingling with the inhabitants, careful not to let their own bias enter into the process. In the community they will take notes and ask questions about the community and concerns of the people. They do an intense observation trying to ascertain the "critical code" of the area. The investigators consider the area as a whole and with each visit attempt to split sections of it apart that seem to be illuminated. This splitting is an endeavor to understand the systemic interconnections of the community. The understanding should later give a guideline of how to infiltrate the constructed social mass.

These investigations create snapshots of life in the area. They can take a direct approach with interviews or indirect with just observations. The observations can be at work, play, religious or social meetings. Even subtle nuances such as speech and inflection, ideas recorded from various activities during the day. The existential meaning of local vocabulary is very important (Freire, 1974). They also are interested in recording social roles, men, women, and children. "During this initial phase the team of educators form rewarding relationships and discover often unsuspected exuberance and beauty in the peoples language" (Freire, 1974, p. 43).

The second stage of the decoding process begins at the culmination of each observation period. The entire team meets along with the indigenous participants and discusses the findings. Each person will have written an essay about the same visit and reflect on his viewpoint through the descriptive viewpoints of each other. This double reflection leads to recreate the process again by starting the method over. The more the group decodes and recodes the whole the more powerful the contradictions appear. This

should create the thematic of the area. Freire felt these contradictions revealed "limit" situations that create themes and produce tasks. Individuals may not even be aware of their limit situations at all. The non-perception of these limiting factors are the case in most instances (Freire, 1970).

From these limiting situations the complex codifications are created. "These representations function as challenges, as coded situation-problems containing elements to be decoded by the groups with the collaboration of the coordinator" (Freire, 1974, p. 45). According to Freire (1970) the first qualification is these codifications or objects bridge the decoders to the limit-situations, they must be from situations that would be understood, or usual to the participants. The second is that they cannot be too explicit or too vague. Too explicit could be considered propaganda and too vague would constitute something that would not be understood or not carry enough meaning. Therefore there should be multiple meanings without illusion. They also must provide a challenge to the everyday life of the participants. Freire (1970) deems this the "thematic fan", as they should spread in multiple directions (p. 115). There must be a discernable dialectical relationship that is observable within the codifications that will produce critical thought. The insight must build upon itself to constitute a totality of meanings, "situationality" (p. 109). In doing so some of the background practices of the group should become apparent to the learner. Once this has occurred the students will be even more likely to reflect and have a discourse on a topic that they perceive as important or interesting. bell hooks (1994) describes this aspect, "Students may be well versed on a subject but be more

inclined to speak confidently if that subject directly relates to their experience" (p. 87).

The reflections, once understood, begin to relate as constructed knowledge to the learner.

From this process a new knowledge base should occur and be revealed to each

learner individually but experienced by the whole.

> Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be "in a situation." Only as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley, and they can come to perceive it as an objective-problematic situation—only then can commitment exist (Freire, 1970, p. 109)

The students begin to see themselves as they are seeing themselves, reflection

upon their own reflection, bringing about a critical awareness of the inner workings of the

themes that are driving their lives. "As an active educational method helps a person to

become consciously aware of his context and his condition as a human being as Subject,

it will become an instrument of choice" (Freire, 1974, p. 48). The new perception of life

becomes constituted as a new construct of knowledge. Once this happens the learner has

changed.

The codifications Freire used were paintings by Francisco Barrand. These

paintings were of peasants farming, because he was teaching peasants.

Once the connection has occurred then the student will provide the direction and

in some cases create additional stimuli to entertain a chain of codifications that are

discussed with an entire group of learners. The process works best if experienced by a

group of several people. The instructor or leader can then add a critique from critical

scholars such as Marx providing the theoretical basis for understanding, enabling the

learners to view give voice to their struggles. The student realizes that he/she has something to offer the learning experience. This realization also means that the student will see themselves through the codifications having a voice in their own lives. The student will be a part of the learning through dialogue. The teacher can become learner and the student can become teacher in the process, it is a true learning experience for everyone involved. "I previously stated that in education the attempt of the teacher-student to understand a cognizable object is not exhausted in that object, because this act extends to other students-teachers in such a way that the cognizable object mediates their capacity for understanding" (Freire, 1970, p. 128-29).

Once the students see their lives from a subject perspective they begin to have hope for change. Within this hope is the idea that "I am moving my life toward where I want to be". It moves from hopeless respite, to hopeful resolve. Critical theory becomes the basis of freedom; to know there are choices! But the learner may feel that they need time to get used to this new found understanding, thus sitting with their new view until they can take up the voice of theory, and give words to their struggles. Eventually this can lead to actions for social justice, creating true praxis in their lives (Freire, 1978).

Conclusion

The ramifications of the use of critical theory in mass education could be profound. Critical theory if used regularly can inform the basis of reflective judgments and understanding from the pedagogical perspective. The teacher through the use of critical theory can adjust his/ her teaching, in philosophy or practice to help create a more democratic world. The idea of curriculum would take new forms and shape bending to

the wielding of social judgments on systemic functions and happenings, a *radical* democracy. As Giroux understands, "This critical or radical democracy, as he employs the term, involves the effort to expand the possibility for social justice, freedom and egalitarian social relations in the educational, economic, political, and cultural domains" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 78).

The investigation and use of critical theory in this dissertation provides the framework for discovery in the classroom. A Freireian perspective will be used to create the possibility of a discursive classroom in one small public alternative school. Through the discourse this researcher will record/ journal the tensions and difficulties associated with such an attempt. Critical theory gives the research a foundation upon which to begin the discovery. It is the hope that in doing so, not only will the research be informative but also help create a bent toward critical thinking in the students themselves. From a critical perspective the students may see the impetus for democratic thought and change not only in themselves but also society.

CHAPTER III

FREE SCHOOL TEACHING

Marionetting people, even and especially if you think it is "for their own good" is
ethically suspect, deeply ineffective, and it lays the groundwork for a culture of
domination. (Hern, 2010, p.69)

Children naturally live at the edges of their abilities (Appleton, 2000, p. 146)

Make no mistake: if a person is determined to learn, they will overcome every
obstacle and learn in spite of everything (SVSE, 1992, p. 8).

But the question I continue to raise is this: What real value does what we call
education have if it is anything less than the means by which we each arrive at the
fullest expression of ourselves for the limited time we have on earth
(Mercogliano, 1998, p. 81).

A survey of the democratic schools movement is included within this dissertation

in order to understand the process and applications of practicing a democratic society.

The democratic school foundations will be investigated in this chapter to provide a model

of how a practicing democratic school or classroom operates. This model will help this

researcher understand and describe some of the foundational processes that provide

support and create the democratic classroom. Many of the processes included in this

model will be employed in the following chapter (4) to help tease background

information out of the collected journals, which will be used to understand how

democracy functions (if there are some democratic functions happening) in the classroom

and also to indicate how the processes revealed in the journals could be fine tuned to help

build a more democratic classroom. The description of the democratic schools will also give a basis for comprehending the tension associated with trying to practice democracy in the public school classroom.

Most of the democratic schools researched were private, a few were public. The literature indicates that it is difficult for these types of schools to operate in the bureaucracy of public school systems. Because of the reliance on standards and grading and age related goals, democratic schools operate beyond the parameter of standard school systems. In order for them to be public they must have existed before such enforced standards, have had a proven track record of success, such as the Open School, or be supported locally by individual school boards. It is due to these pressures and the need to remain autonomous, that most free/ democratic schools located were private (AERO, 2010).

The chapter will be split into sections according to the foundational principles of the democratic schools surveyed. These sections will not reflect the entire breath of democratic school foundations but will provide a broad swath of democratic practices in the classroom. The sections will include: History, Governance, Curriculum, Public vs. Private, and Responsibility. These headings will enable the reader to categorize some of the characteristics of the democratic schools for better clarity. In doing so, the reader should understand that many of the concepts discussed in this chapter are wholly or partly connected to each other, therefore, it is purely for understanding that they are separated but in practice are not separated at all.

History

The democratic school movement came into being as an offshoot of the progressive education movement. Pioneers such as John Dewey and others, in the beginning of the century, sought to change education to make it more "child" centered and experiential. From there a few educational scholars took the concepts of the progressives, and began to create schools that used some of their research discoveries. Several democratic schools began to appear on the landscape of education. The characteristics of these schools varied but they all had some form of democratic type governance that included votes or direct input from the students and/ or a student controlled curriculum.

The model I have decided to study is based on one of the oldest and foremost of these schools, Summerhill, a small private boarding school in England. Summerhill was founded by educational psychologist A. S. Neil. Neil believed that children learn naturally, on their own, by studying concepts and items that interest them. To Neil, teachers were useful, as tools to guide students to help discover and study information interesting to them. The idea that students were empty shells that needed to be filled from an external institution like a school seemed foolish to Neil (Neil, 1960). According to Neil, teachers are only useful to students if they have knowledge that the students are interested in, not knowledge the state says must be learned.

The notion that students can learn on their own was a novel concept back then; now having a greater following, but still causing quite a stir when it is mentioned in educational communities. Neil wrote extensively on the subject and was visited

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frequently by like minded progressives in education seeking to reform the system. He

also published several books, many of which are still in print today.

Many progressive educators in turn used Neil's work to offer alternatives to the

packaged curriculum that was becoming increasingly popular. The packaged curriculum

coming from large publishing houses, as it does today, had ideals inherent in it that

concerned the progressives of the time. Ideas such as: everyone must learn the same

concepts, only learning from a packaged curriculum is valuable, concepts are teachable

only when split in to their respective subjects. These progressives also had concerns

about notions of discipline and control, equating the public school system with prisons.

Much of this concern was due to the control of movement in all the schools, which

seemed to limit freedom and responsible choices. As more progressives interrogated

these topics, Neil's writings and the Summerhill model were operational working

examples of how a truly democratic education could look.

The Summerhill model included the concepts: of self-governance (The general

meeting), no compulsory classes, and lots of play, the arts, constant dialogue between

adults and students, students as active participants in their education. Summerhill still

operates with these concepts in place. Since 1921, Summerhill has offered the idea of a

free education, not free in cost because Summerhill, like most democratic schools, is

private, but free in the fact that students choose what they want to learn. Therefore many

of the schools that espouse this model are considered "free schools" (Mercogliano, 1992).

The students are not coerced or cajoled into learning about things in which they have no

interest. Therefore when a student wants to learn a concept, according to Neil, there is an

intrinsic motivation to learn, and with this interest, profound intensity in the process itself. Students become the authors of their own knowledge (Neil, 1960).

Educators and concerned citizens, in the United States, took notice and began to open up "free" schools. Fashioned on the philosophies of A. S. Neil, these schools became somewhat popular during the counter-culture time of the sixties. After the counterculture grew silent, many of the schools lost support or were openly attacked by the conservative and corporate voices of the mainstream schools and publishing businesses. These onslaughts lead to a decline in their popularity, as people embraced a more conservative corporatist viewpoint.

Some of these schools did survive and are still in operation. Schools such as the Sudbury Valley School and the Albany Free School provide working models, and organizations such as the Alternative Education Resource Association, provide publishing and information access for people interested in these concepts today.

The Sudbury Valley School in the US, and other survivors provide a rich background of information, having been in operation for over 40 years, on the validity of offering an education based on personal responsibility for learning, and freedom to learn. These ideals have come in fashion again due to the current obsession with accountability. Parents and educators alike have grown increasingly concerned with the use of benchmarks and uniformity within the public school system. The rise of many new free schools in the past several years is evidence of this concern (AERO, 2010). Most of these new free schools use the basic model of Summerhill and Sudbury Valley to outline how their schools should operate.

Governance

The main feature of these free schools is how they are governed. Unlike a public school that is governed by an external school board, then a principal and other administrators, the free schools are governed internally by the students and teachers themselves. The basis of this governance is some kind of a general (democratic) meeting. The meeting has different names in the different schools but it invariably produces the same kind of governance (Appleton, 2000, Mercogliano, 1998; Morrision, 2009; Neil, 1960; SVSE, 1992).

As A. S. Neil (1960) explains:

> Summerhill is a self-governing school, democratic in form. Everything connected with social, or group life, including punishment for social offences, is settled by a vote at the Saturday night General Meeting. Each member of the teaching staff (including house-parents) and each child, regardless of his age, has one vote. My vote carries the same weight as that of a seven-year-old (p. 16).

What is captured in this statement is that governance is everyone's responsibility, from a seven-year-old to the Principal. There is an intrinsic motivation to participate and make/ practice decision-making, which truly affects lives on a weekly basis. At some schools such as Sudbury Valley the teachers are even hired by a vote of the students (The Sudbury Valley School Experience, 1992). Decision-making is taken from an abstract realm directly to concrete. The decisions the staff and students make this week will have real, concrete consequences in the following weeks. The students can readily see the causality between what they decide and what is created from that decision, (Mercogliano, 1998; Neil, 1960; SVSE, 1992).

These general meetings provide a rich experiential context for learning how decisions are made and that they have true immediate consequences. "The educational benefit of practical civics cannot be over-emphasized. At Summerhill, the pupils would fight to the death for their right to govern themselves" (Neil, 1960, p. 30). The students at Summerhill have even outvoted the teachers to do away with many of the rules that had been created by other General Meetings, and then later realized after a few weeks that the rules need to be brought back so that everyone could live together without so much friction. When later groups of younger new students suggested removing the rules the older students would out vote them and explain what it was like when they tried that earlier (Neil, 1960). The General Meeting as Neil stated is an exercise in practical civics, where social decisions can be experience and learned concretely (Appleton, 2000; Neil, 1960).

The compositions of the General Meetings in the various democratic school formats are similar. The meetings consist of the entire student body that is present at the time and an elected leader that facilitates the meeting. At Summerhill the leader is referred to as the chairperson, and he/ she is elected for the next meeting during the current meeting. Almost all students act as chairperson sometime during their stay at the school. The chairperson has to abstain from voting and if the chairperson is interested in voting on an issue or pursuing a discussion on an issue, he/ she must step down from the position and a new chairperson is installed.

According to Matthew Appleton (2000) who wrote the latest comprehensive work on Summerhill:

> The chairperson's job is to take hands, count votes, and control the meeting. S/he has the power to fine people for talking when their names have not been called. S/he can wind a business up if it has been going on for a long time and people are beginning to repeat themselves. If people are being continually disruptive the chairperson can throw them out. The chairperson even has the power to close a meeting if it becomes very unruly, though I have only ever seen this happen once (p. 93).

Each item that is brought up in the meeting is termed a "case". Any concern which a member of the staff or students has is fair game in the meetings. For example if you have taken something and refuse to give it back or if you are picking on other students, these issues can be brought up and resolved by the community as a whole (Appleton, 2000). Proposals are made by any member of the meeting and offer solutions to the problem, then the community as a whole votes on these issues. Both sides of the issue are given a chance to state their case in front of the meeting, giving each person a true voice in the process. The research indicates that in Summerhill and other democratic schools, the students and staff take these meeting very seriously. If it is a grievance for breaking a rule or conduct with another student a fine may be imposed or extra work assigned, such as cleaning the yard. The students/ staff take these in stride and almost always complete the tasks assigned. At Summerhill there is another meeting called Tribunal where a case can be sent, normally for behavior, if it cannot be resolved in the general meeting. The people that sit on the Tribunal are elected during the general meeting (Appleton, 2000; Neil, 1960).

It is understood at these meetings that the children's opinions and issues are just as important as the adults. There is no hierarchy when it comes to the way issues are

viewed when they are brought up in these meetings. "Children understand the emotional

dimensions of each other's actions more readily than most adults do" (Appleton, 2000, p.

98). The general meeting participants, due to the discourse involved, have the ability to

understand their peers more intimately, on a personal level. The participants form a

compassionate whole that would indicate, in a free responsible society, they can look at

the issues from an impassioned place, perceiving nuances that would leave an outsider

guessing.

From the place of empathy the participants lend themselves to a learned/ practiced

respect for human rights, theirs and the rights of others. Rights seem to be understood

from a less lofty height as described in a textbook; a down to earth perspective. Appleton

(2000) describes this perspective:

> There is no attempt to rise above the issue, only to deal with it as practically and
> straightforwardly as possible. Summerhillians are an uncomplicated lot.
> Antisocial behavior is accepted but not indulged. By accepted I do not mean
> acceptable. What I mean is this: at Summerhill we look at life frankly and
> honestly, and we recognize that almost everyone has stolen something at some
> time, lost their temper on occasion, invaded someone's privacy, or behaved in
> some manner that has hurt another person's feelings. So when I say we accept
> anti-social behavior I mean we do not meet it with shock or outrage, but with
> down-to-earth practical solutions (p.98).

From this perspective justice and rights are not seen as abstract concepts, described by

teachers or listed in textbooks, but real and practiced understandings that directly

influence one's everyday life. These meetings are perceived as practical exercises in the

ability of people from different socio-economic classes, ages, sexes, and emotional

stances to get along and have a functioning productive community. The relevance is

immediate and purposeful, producing cohesions and interest from the practice itself.

Children do not skip these meetings because the concrete functions of their lives can be

affected by the decisions made during them (Appleton, 2000; Neil, 1960).

Once the meeting concludes there is a time for appeals to any fines or restrictions

that might have been imposed on a member. The appeals are taken seriously. Normally if

a person has been fined and s/he is guilty they simply accept the fine and move on.

However, in instances when a member is adamant about a fine being applied in error, the

general meeting looks at the case again. Sometimes the fine can be reduced or even

dropped if new evidence is found or a more adamant speech is given to the community.

Some rulings are appealed due to their severity, a fine being too much or the restriction

being too harsh. The meeting will then rule on the issue again adjusting their previous

judgment to reflect their new understanding (Appleton, 2000; Neil, 1960).

From the place of the council/ general meeting and the practice of generating a

dialogue from one's own position, creates a reflective process that in many instances

generates critical consciousness.

Kristian Morrison (2009) researching the Albany Free School states:

> Critical consciousness is composed of a set of other characteristics or actions, all
> of which are geared toward being critically aware of one's self and one's world.
> Critical consciousness includes the practice and ability to questions and challenge,
> to name one's problems or obstacles, to self-evaluate, to be resistant to suggestive
> leaders or demands for hyperobedience, to be able to debate, discuss, probe,
> compromise and thus to see or imagine other possibilities (p. 84).

Students as well as adults in the democratic schools see themselves as active members,

making meaning of their lives. They practice critique and self-examination during the

General Meeting thus cautiously reflecting on their positions and others within their

microcosm of society. Morrison (2009) again relates:

> As mentioned earlier, council meetings exist as a means for students to assert their
> rights by naming their problems and working through conflict. In the process of
> these meetings, students develop critical consciousness habits such as questioning
> and coming to understand one another and one-self, seeking out the core or root
> of problems, challenging ideas if they seem wrong or false, debating the efficacy,
> reasonableness, or justice of certain motions or amendments, probing to find out
> more, compromising with others if one is at an impasse, and so on (p. 84).

At Summerhill the General Meeting does not hire teachers or do administrative

functions, it mainly addresses the students' lives directly. At Sudbury Valley the general

meeting becomes a bit more administrative, votes on the hiring of teachers, approving a

budget, and many other tasks usually maintained by the administration in a regular public

school (SVSE, 1992).

At these free schools, governance takes on a "real" and practiced meaning. The

students make real decisions that affect their lives and from these decisions practice the

responsibility that is mirrored in the function of being an adult member of society.

The meetings give the students systemic example of the process that they will

have to employ to be productive members of society and active learners within the school

setting, this begins the process of self-governance.

One of the primary side-effects of the council meetings is the development of self

testing. Fear is rampant in our society, but the fear to speak publicly seems to trump the

other fears. Having to stand up and defend what they believe in during a council meetings does the students in the democratic schools a great service by teaching them and giving them practice at public speaking. They learn how to express, defend and test their ideas in a forum that gives essential and immediate feedback and helps them to clarify their ideas. The research indicates that this process is one of the most valuable that free schools have in their repertoire (Appleton, 2000; Mercogliano, 1998; Morrison, 2007; Neil, 1960; SVSE, 1992). Neil (1960) relates:

> In my opinion, one weekly General Meeting is of more value than a week's curriculum of school subjects. It is an excellent theatre for practicing public speaking, and most of the children speak well and without self-consciousness (p. 30).

The overarching result that stems from the school democratic meetings is self-governance. Self-governance can take many guises, but in essence it forms the basis of the entire workings of the democratic school. Self- governance is the ability of the self to create its own boundaries and motivations.

Curriculum

The curriculum in the free/ democratic schools is not dictated by state or national standards, but is decided on by the students. There is an amalgamation of traditional curriculum, such as formal classes and others, that students at the free school are interested in learning. The idea of curriculum is stretched to include many things that are not part of what would be considered curriculum in traditional schools. The open curriculum covers the entire gambit of the educational processes at the democratic

school, from the class operation to play. This section is divided into parts for clarity but all are included as working parts of the entire curriculum.

Classes

Classes at the various democratic schools range from formal classes that are scheduled, to informal learning experiences such as trips, a practice of the arts (drama, music, painting, drawing, poetry, writing), sports and even a process like maple sapping. The common element at these schools is that the students choose what classes they want to be in each and every day. It is a personal choice that centers on what the student is feeling at that minute. Whereas, students from traditional schools can choose their classes for a semester, students at democratic schools, choose what they will do each day. This allows the student to mix and match his/ her schedule to the needs of that day, or week. Students also have the option of not going to class at all and "playing" all day (Appleton, 2000, Galley, 2004; Morrision, 2009; Neil, 1060, Ruenzel, 1994). There is a maximum amount of decision making done each day. Appleton (2000) relates:

> At Summerhill the kids feel approved of whether they go to lessons or not. They experience freedom as natural. It is their right, and is respected by the community they belong to. They make their own choices. To be dictated to would seem alien to them. To fear adults and to have to live out their pleasures hidden from them would be unthinkable (p. 138).

At the democratic school when the student attends class it is because s/he feels the need to. There is no enforcement to attend class by the teachers. No fear, that the teachers will see a student in the hall and reprimand them for not attending class. There is no

undercurrent of teachers trying to "catch" students skipping or not doing their assignments.

If there is a discipline problem at school it is taken care of in the meeting system. Therefore the fear from hierarchal enforcement or non-enforcement of discipline problems is the responsibility of the community as well as the individual, fear is minimized because the solutions are based in practicality and familiarity. The students go to class ready to learn, because they have chosen to learn that subject for today, or for this week or year and no one is there to tell them otherwise because they are following their own expectations.

Play

Play can be regarded as a part of the curriculum at democratic schools. From play students are able to nimbly create their own worlds: businesses, sports, relationships and even architecture. On researching the Sudbury Valley School, Marano (2006) states in *Psychology Today*:

> Play-it's by definition absorbing. The outcome is always uncertain. Play makes children nimble neurobiodogically, mentally, behaviorally-capable of adapting to a rapidly evolving world. That makes it just about the best preparation for life in the 21st century. Psychologists believe that play cajoles people toward their human potential because it preserves all the possibilities nervous systems tent to otherwise prune away. It's no accident that all of the predicaments of play- the challenges, the dares, the races and chases-model the struggle for survival. Think of play as the future with sneakers on (p. 96).

As Marano indicates play is an efficient mechanism for teaching many skills that are needed for life in today's times. All the democratic schools have a great deal of time for play. Students who choose to play all day long are not looked on as skipping. Instead the

value of play is an inherent part of the democratic curriculum. The literature mentions

that students that come from other schools to the democratic schools spend a great deal of

time playing before they decide to go to class. The students seem to want to ground

themselves in their own existence first, before they begin to learn from another. The

grounding consists of spending time doing what they feel is necessary, from reading to

listening to their I-pod, taking back their labor by deciding what they do with their time.

Normally this consists of things that would not be allowed in traditional schooling, such

as building a fort in the woods or fishing (SVSE, 1992). The amount of time it takes a

student to get back into a classroom varies from student to student (Appleton, 2000;

Mercogliano, 1992).

Play does not solely include play by oneself, but play with others as well.

Therefore play can include a host of other types of knowledge and learning. As Morrison

(2009) points out, "Free play also means free interaction with others, including adults,

and a great deal of academic learning goes on in such interactions" (p. 77). Morrison

describes when students are engaged in conversations with adults they are learning all

different kinds of concepts, as are the adults.

Discourse

The direct communication available with adults at the democratic schools is

different from the conversations at regular schools. The difference is that because the

teachers are on somewhat of an equal footing with students, there is much more honesty

moving between the conversing parties. Students at the free schools are not scared of

asking outrageous questions, or making statements about things they are not quite sure of

just to get the teacher's input. The students are simply not afraid of being wrong. The students are not afraid of making mistakes, because of the equal stance of teacher to student, they feel empowered for trying and not insulted if the teacher tells them that they need to do more research on the topic (Appleton, 2000).

With the ability to communicate with adults comes the ability to critique them as well. Ira Shor (1996) describes how this process influences the teacher- student relationship. "I had to learn how to sit in close quarters with students who were dissecting a class I just led, but I sensed that questioning authority in-process at the immediate site of power relations is exactly what a critical-democratic process should produce" (p. 124). Not only does such discourse create involvement from the students, it helps teachers produce better teaching. The dynamics of democratic communication require the ability to forge critique and accept critique.

Fear-free

Absence of fear is one of the most profound characteristics of the democratic schools. Students are not afraid. They display the opposite, engagement without fear. From teacher relations as mentioned above, to peer relations, students have a voice for their concerns and grievances that keeps fear to a minimum. The overarching reason for this is that if a student is getting bullied or picked on, they can bring this up at the general meeting. The student states the problem (which could be with a teacher or any member that is on site), the person to which the complaint is directed is offered the right to state his/ her case, and then the student body decides the punishment or reparations. The power of students having a voice helps to limit the action of fear (Appleton, 2000, Neil,

1960). Research has shown that fear alone is detrimental to motivation, as well as the

acceptance of the subject matter (Springle, Hunt, Simonds & Comadena, 2006). It has

also shown that fear is a direct interrupter of knowledge acquisition because it activates

the reptilian brain, the part of the brain that functions on an instinctual and not a cognitive

level (Mercogliano, 1998). Once a student has been exposed to fear, either from the

teacher or other external systemic feature, they become more primal. This orientation is

because fear creates an internal primal orientation within the student, where the student is

not able to concentrate on abstract functions due to the activation of the "fight or flight"

areas of the brain.

There are many fears that our society places before the student before they walk

into the school building. Compulsory schooling is just another in a long list of fears

students have to confront (Illich, 1972). Even though the school uses the general meeting

and does not demand that students go to classes, the free school staff must constantly

make up for this systemic fear in the students and parents.

Mercogliano (1998) describes this in his book about the Albany Free School:

> Even though we long ago opted out of the traditional reward-and- punishment
> teaching methodology that uses fear as a prime motivator, and even though we are
> up-front with our prospective new families right from the beginning that we will
> neither con nor coerce their children into learning, the distinctive odor of fear
> remains in the air nonetheless (p. 60).

The absence of compulsion-based fear in the classroom and school settings

according to the advocates of the democratic schools creates a more authentic and

cognitively diverse learning experience (Mercogilano, 1998; Neil, 1960).

Grading-free

Another difference between the democratic school's curriculum and a traditional curriculum is the absence of grades or a grading policy. Students do not go to class to get grades rather they go to class to learn what they want to know about. The rewards built by the democratic schools are purely intrinsic. They are not ranked or sorted by class structure or learning abilities. The students merely choose to learn what they feel is interesting and valuable. As mentioned earlier the whole school environment is regarded as learning experience. The close contact with the teachers and each other allows for multiple learning experiences free from the guise of any sorting or ranking method. This factor allows the students to pursue what matters to them in their lives (Neil, 1960; Posner, 2009; SVSE, 1992).

The primary concern with this method is that the students will not learn about that which they are not interested (Learning Trumps Time, 2010). According to the democratic school literature, that is true. But when the student is personally responsible for his/ her own education, they do learn the basics because they know that they will need to understand them to be successful in the field that they are studying or may want to be employed (Neil, 1960). There is an intrinsic motivation to learn everything that will help with one's primary interest; reading and writing are involved in every primary interest area. As Morrison (2009) describes:

> Teachers see a student show a spark of interest in something and from that encourage the child. For example, both Trent and Peter, seventh and eighth graders, respectively, expressed a desire to work on their reading skills, perhaps realizing that they would soon be attending public high school and that these skills needed some developing (p. 130).

The research indicates that most students do learn the primary skills before they leave the democratic school setting (Appleton, 2000; Neil, 1960). In addition they have also been exposed to a functioning democracy, and civic and personal responsibility.

Field Trips/ Off School Settings

Much of the literature describes multiple field trips taken during the semester. Not just field trips, as in the case of the Albany Free School, sometimes permanent camps that move children out of familiar surroundings and expose them to new environments. The logic behind taking lots of field trips is that, since much of learning is experiential, it is better to experience it in person than to read or see it in a video. The trips also provide a platform to create meaning from direct experience in student's lives. Posner (2009) explains, "School trips also helped to create a collective consciousness about searching for meaning from experiences" (p. 137). The field trip programs at the alternative schools, that were reviewed, were both planned and spontaneous.

At the Albany Free School the staff and students have a permanent camp that is out in the wilderness. Rainbow Camp as it is known is in New York State, at the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains. The staff term the experience there "outdoor education". Most of the students at the Albany Free School come from inner-city areas, being exposed to the countryside can have profound effects on them. One of the tasks they are able to participate in is Maple Sugaring, the process by which maple syrup is made. It is a process that takes time and patience, a great experience for the students and they are exposed to a situation that is totally foreign to them. This enables them to take a fresh

new look at themselves and the world (Mercoglino, 1992). As Mercoglino (1992) describes:

> The time spent at the camp is an integral part of what we do. It is a place where I have witnessed personal revolutions in dozens of children over the years. The reason for this, I am quite certain, is the fact that everyone suddenly finds themselves displaced from their familiar patterns, with very few props to fall back on. It's much like nineteenth-century rural farm life. We live as a sprawling extended family, with even the youngest sharing the cooking, cleaning and wood- water- gathering chores, and the oldest often reading bedtime stories to the younger kids (p. 71-72)

Taking students out of their familiar surrounds helps them to see themselves and the world differently and therefore can create some profound learning.

The Open School of Colorado, an alternative high school, actually has *passages* that their students must perform. One of these passages is the Adventure Passage where they design their own trips and adventures to help them better understand themselves and the world. These student-designed passages give the students first-rate personal knowledge about things in which they are interested. "Every Student is continually asked: What did this experience mean for your personal growth?" (Posner, 2009, p. 138). Therefore during the trips students are asked to personally evaluate their experience. The personal evaluation leads to understandings that are unable to occur in the classroom. Students are also allowed and encouraged to find meaning from any experience in their lives and relate that back to what their personal goals and values are (Posner, 2009). Having learning directly based on experience, being drawn back into personal refection, is a concept that most of the free schools understand as a valuable part of their curriculum.

Other indications in the literature are that some trips are entirely spontaneous and based on something interesting that students have uncovered. As in a love for painting, studying Monet, then going to see the traveling Monet exhibit at the city museum, then returning and discussing the powerful feelings students have about seeing the real art they have been researching. Another example may be going to a different kind of restaurant and experiencing the cuisine and foreign atmosphere. The trips and outings discussed in the literature run the gamut, of climbing famous mountains, to going to a public swimming pool. The similarities come from the staffs' ideas that these outings are extremely valuable to student learning and understanding of themselves. (Mercoliano, 1992; Morrision, 2009; Neil, 1960; Posner, 2009)

Apprenticeships

One of the primary features within the curriculum of the democratic schools is the notion of apprenticeships. Once the most widely used tool for personal education, before public education had taken root, it now seems to be reserved for higher education or not valued at all. Apprenticeships are real life work experiences based in a field that the student has an interest. The student is placed in a business, many times working for free to get the experience, and learns a trade from a master craftsman themselves. As Chris Mercogliano (1992) describes at the Albany Free School:

> Our older students usually spend at least part of each week involved in an apprenticeship or internship in an area of strong interest to them. Over the years they have worked with veterinarians, lawyers, artists, writers, dancers, models, cartoonists, magicians, boat builders, photographers, horse trainers, pilots, museums curators, chefs and computer engineers. Again, no obligation; though almost everyone jumps at the chance to be around an adult who's doing something they think they might like to try one day (p. 42)

A good portion of the democratic school literature encountered mentioned some form of apprentice programs being used to foster student experiential learning. (Appleton, 2000; Mercogliano, 1992; Posner, 2009; SVSE, 1992)

Age-mixing

Most of the democratic schools that were researched, did not separate students by age except for certain classes, or ages under six or so. Many of the schools cited this as being one of the most important policies that the school had. The evidence that students garnish motivation and peer learning from having older students at their disposal to ask questions, or to model behavior was mentioned in much of the literature. At the Sudbury Valley School they even referred to the policy of age mixing as their *secret weapon of education*. Teachers at the Sudbury Valley School feel that there are two great benefits created by age mixing: reality modeling and communication (world view). These two processes over time enable the student to understand concepts and communications that are not within their immediate knowledge base. Reality modeling (sees adults model behavior in various settings, and encodes them) creates understanding on a conceptual level and the world view (looking at things from a distance) enables the students to communicate with adults and their peers on a higher conceptual scale. In order to create these models you have to be exposed to people that are using them (Birdsey, 2009; SVSE, 1992). Daniel Greeneburg from the Sudbury Valley School explains:

> A person learns not only by making everything up from scratch, but by looking around and observing and studying and thinking about how other people deal with the world. That's where age mixing comes in. A person who grows up

absolutely alone in a totally isolated environment is obviously going to have a completely different way of functioning as an adult that a person who has grown up in a social environment. Indeed, one of the functions of social interactions in a society is to provide alternate life models for the people in a society. (SVSE, 1992, p. 125)

What Greeneburg is referring to is, with age- mixing younger kids can see how the adults and older kids understand concepts. The students can see the very thought processes that are used to create meaning from the world. This enables them to experience these models first, sometimes many different process, thus creating mental maps that they may themselves employ for understanding (SVSE, 1992).

The second process that Greeneburg mentions is communication. Understanding frames of communication is essential for transference of knowledge. Exposure to adult and older students' frames enables younger students to grasp where they are coming from, therefore communication can be facilitated. Greeneburg uses a college professor trying to teach physics to freshmen as an example:

The problem is that the freshman doesn't understand what the physicist's way of approaching the world is. No matter how many times the teacher repeats a particular physical theory, it is lacking any foundation in the world view of the student. So there is no communication and nothing ever happens in the student's mind (SVSE, 1998, p. 128)

Once the student understands the viewpoint of the professor then he can understand the concepts the professor is trying to communicate to him. Age mixing provides examples of world views through constant communication with adults and older peers, which gives the student reference from which to understand the modeling they are experiencing.

According to the democratic school literature these features of age mixing allow students that come from democratic school to be extremely adept at problem solving and at ease in communication with adults (SVSE, 1992, Merciogliano, 1998, Appleton, 2000). Both these assets are useful in any society or civic group, where coping with one's surroundings is paramount to survival.

Creativity

The process of creativity is vital to understanding and invention.

As a teacher from Sudbury Valley states:

> They explore. They imitate, They experience. They build more complex world views from trial and error. It is simple to understand, but terribly difficult to accept, that the individual is best served at every age by allowing that native curiosity and creativity to be undeflected and uninterrupted. That the best schooling may be the schooling that least impeades the mind's free exploration of the environment (SVSE, 1992, p. 212).

It is important to understand that the literature describes that the freedom that the democratic schools espouse, creates the space where personal creativity blossoms both visually and mentally. The distinctions between the two are subtle: visually- are the products that the students produce, mentally- is the creative thought process behind these products. The students and teachers in democratic schools seem to flourish in this environment. "We recognize the simple truth that no one else can find your bliss for you, because this is a process of self-discovery requiring an environment that supports such a task (Merciogliano, 1998, p. 82).

The arts are valued at the democratic schools as an important part of the environment. They provide a space to nurture innovation, invention and communication,

as well as personal goal completion. The arts can also be used as a catalyst for personal

risk taking and reflective understanding. For example, at Summerhill there is a specific

type of art activity that is utilized by the community, called spontaneous acting. The staff

at Summerhill, will just ask the students to act out a certain scenario. This enables the

children to role play as fun. As Neil (1960) explains, "Another time I asked the children

to telephone the doctor and get the butcher by mistake. One boy carried on a confusing

conversation about the liver and heart" (p. 97). These spontaneous acting opportunities

gave the students the ability to practice all kinds of situations, reflect on them and enjoy

the process. Students don't have a chance to get nervous or anxious making the

experience enjoyable and fun (Neil,1960).

Ordinary theatre is also a part of Summerhill, except only plays written by the

students or staff are performed. Neil states that the theatre is the most productive vehicle

for creativity boosting in all the things attempted at Summerhill.

As a teacher from Sudbury Valley commented, "How, we asked, can a school best

foster creativity? The answer was amazingly simple—and amazingly complex. People

are learners. They are born already working on their education. They are born 'curious

and striving'" (SVSE, 1992, p. 212)! The most important mission for schools is not to

discourage or squash this budding creative curiosity.

The Emotional Self

One of the major side effects of the democratic schools is "caring". The format of

these schools allows for the caring of the individual in a group setting. The ethos of

caring is rooted in the concerns of the community. If one is watching out for his/ her

community then one must care about the members of the community. As Morrison

(2009) reveals, "Free School students actively cooperate with one another in working

through personal challenges" (p. 114). Many of the students' problems are manifested in

behavior and then worked out in the community meetings. Therefore the general

meetings themselves are therapeutic because of the caring of the community and the

welfare of its members (Appleton, 2000; Morrision, 2009).

Morrision (2009) also comments on the members of the Albany Free School

actively cooperating with one another without a teacher prompt:

> Interpersonal cooperation showed up in other ways in the school bedsides
> assisting others in council meetings to work though their problems and in
> respecting the rights of others to pursue their interests. Inter-age cooperation was
> also much in evidence. I frequently saw children of different ages playing
> together, or older children acting in nurturing ways to younger children. Another
> form of cooperation that I quite often observed was a tremendous level or
> resource cooperation or sharing (p. 114).

Much of the same sentiment is reiterated throughout the democratic school literature. As

Neil (1960) responds:

> The reason we here at Summerhill keep getting such good reports about the
> industrious performance of our old pupils in responsible jobs is that these boys
> and girls have lived out their self-centered fantasy stage in Summerhill. As young
> adults they are able to face the realities of life without any unconscious longing
> for the play of childhood (p. 41).

In addition the playing of sports at the democratic schools provides emotional

support for the students. As a teacher at Sudbury Valley mentions, "They learn

teamwork—not the we against them' type of teamwork, but the teamwork of a diverse

group of people of diverse talents organizing themselves to pursue a common activity—

the teamwork of life" (SVSE, 1992, p. 65). Due to age- mixing students have to deal

with different abilities and in doing so create a practice in understanding, where everyone

that plays can have fun and move to a common goal.

The friendship factor at the democratic schools seems to foster positive emotive

responses. Students and adults are able due to the communicative structure of the

democratic schools engage in multiple friendships across a variety of ages and

intelligence. The literature indicates that the friendships at these schools tend to be less

clique orientated and more inclusive (Neil, 1960; SVSE, 1992). The posturing and other

common activities that occur in regular school settings is de-emphasized, because of the

input of so many other diversifying characteristics such as age-mixing. This provides the

students with freedom to experiment with different personas without getting too many

criticisms for not conforming. This type of support that the democratic community

expresses helps to provide emotional stability for the student. The stability comes from

the student being able to try on personalities and characteristics and not be intimidated by

their friends, and also the ability to be wrong and to change.

Lack of coercion

In a functional democracy citizens must have the ability to make choices without

coercion. But in addition to just making choices, there must be sufficient free

information allowed in the environment, or flow of information so that the citizenry is

able to make and defend their choices. This becomes a primary function and motivator of

democracy. The democratic schools allow their students and teachers to make collective

and individual decisions based on many factors, including intuitive decisions, based on the heart. The ability to make individual and collective decisions without coercion is paramount to a functioning democracy. Otherwise there cannot be democracy (Appleton, 2000; Morrison, 2009; Neil, 1960).

The school meeting is an un-coerced body. The students and teachers can state their positions and defend them in the most serious or trivial circumstances. The importance of non- coercion cannot be overstated. The power truly resides in the hands of all. As Appleton (2000) refers to the democratic meetings of Summerhill, "The meetings are not lame affairs overseen by benevolent adults, but are dynamic, animated affairs that put the running of our everyday lives well and truly in the hands of the community" (p. 115). The meetings are non-coerced affairs, offering the students the ability to make decisions and hear opinions without anyone discounting their voice. The notion that children have to be coerced to create order is displaced with the idea, that children given just a slight bit of guidance can create their own order that is perfectly acceptable. "Neil recognized long ago that children were able to determine the course of their own lives" (Appleton, 2000, p. 115).

The lack of coercion can also be seen with an open curriculum. The students are able to ask for, attend at will, help create, and amend their classes. There is no one on campus demanding that a child go to class. The students go to classes based on their own motivation to learn the subject (Marano, 2006).

Responsibility

The overall result according to the literature, of participation in a democratic school, is one of practiced personal responsibility (Appleton, 2000; Morrison, 2009; Mercogliano, 1992; Neil, 1960). Democratic schools breed responsibility, both for the student and teacher alike. The creation of personal responsibility both in education and personal traits is a profound sub- function of democratic practice. Students and teachers alike know that their very existence depends on the decisions that they make every day. The results of these decisions are concrete to the community and individuals within the community. The students can witness the results of their decisions firsthand. This existential occurrence provides feedback that can easily be understood and comprehended, showing the student causality from their finite judgments. Responsibility comes from the direct practice of self-regulation. The understanding that pervades the literature of democratic schools is that children have the ability and wisdom to help create the community. As A. S. Neil (1960) understands, "My view is that a child is innately wise and realistic" (p. 9). Within this wisdom is understanding that sometimes adults cannot comprehend until exposed to such reasoning. In many cases this can be the impetus for a new understanding.

The adults and students appreciating, respecting each other's input creates an environment that seems to enhance responsibility. This is due to the fact that the students and teachers are personally directly affected by their decisions, and the revelation of such creates responsibility. The responsibility is concrete as mentioned earlier. It becomes part of the lived experience. Even when the community decides to punish a member, the

students take their punishments in stride. As Neil (1960) describes, "No culprit at Summerhill ever shows any signs of defiance or hatred of the authority of his community. I am always surprised at the docility our pupils show when punished" (p. 21). It seems Neil is relating to the fact that students see themselves within the community, having a vested interest in it. The punishment helps them create balance in their responsibility, there is no guilt, because it has been taken care of. Therefore responsibility is not perceived as a great burden, merely an everyday practice. At the Sudbury Valley School this sentiment is echoed, "To begin with, the school is noticeably well-ordered, mush to the surprise of many outsiders, who wonder at the deep sense of internal harmony present in a school where there is so much personal freedom in daily activities" (SVSE, 1992, p. 185). This statement by a Sudbury Valley staff-member indicates a great deal of involvement and responsibility on the part of the students.

Another factor that contributes to the responsibility is the loyalty that the students have to the community. Loyalty is always a defining part of responsibility. Students at the various schools, according to the literature have a great deal of loyalty to their schools. As Neil explains (1960):

> The loyalty of Summerhill pupils to their own democracy is amazing. It has no fear in it, and no resentment. I have seen a boy go through a long Special Meeting for some anti-social act, and I have seen him sentenced. Often, the boy who has just been sentenced is elected as chairman for the next general meeting (p. 24).

One could deem this responsibility "community". The students and teachers are one in the process of community. In accepting this process, responsibility is incurred.

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This is due to the fact of the true accountability that is assumed by being part of a true democratic community. Webster's Online dictionary (2010) defines responsibility:" as the quality and state of being responsible: moral, legal, or mental accountability" (no page). In the state of true concrete community the accountability is seen immediately with the decisions made, each decision creating more accountability, thus responsibility. As Mercogliano (1998) describes,

> The school community will have compassion for us, and if we want, it will try to help us work whatever it is through so that we can check our troubles at the door. In other words, the free school is a community because it is a place where everyone actively cares about everyone else (p. 127).

The effect of practicing democracy on a small scale is responsibility. Each member can see how their decisions help create/ destroy the community.

Conclusion

The literature about the practice of democracy in schools reveals that a democratic classroom is a possibility and can create citizens much like the Realized Collected Self-managed Citizen at least on a limited scale. The literature never specifically mentions subjecthood, but all the traits described indicates that the curriculum of democratic practice produces; a subject, willing to take responsibility for his/ her education, the community and their own actions. Personal subject-hood is the manifestation of these traits.

The research from this chapter will be applied to the autobiographical process and used to interpret the journals that will be collected. The exact processes that will be compared/ filtered between the literature and the journals will differ because of the lack

of freedom in a traditional classroom. Many of the foundational principles, such as the general meeting, age- mixing, class selection are not allowed at the target school. What will be applied from this chapter is the difference that is noted between the processes and results in both settings. When there is a concern in the journals, it might be questioned by a process noted in this chapter, trying to pinpoint a tension or function that is addressed by a working democratic classroom. The lens that has been developed by researching the democratic schools will create the democratic foundation from which to interpret the process and functions that become apparent from the journals in Currere practice.

The democratic examples enable this researcher to draw an inference and then expansion to what the situation could look like if addressed in a democratic setting. From these inferences and expansions some conclusions and suggestions can be made to further democratic practice and alleviate/ explain some of the tensions associated with public school teaching.

CHAPTER IV

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIVE PROCESS

We agree, too, that to claim "reality" is a "contested terrain" is to understate the case. It is a battleground where armies of the personal, the political, the cultural, the linguistic, the racial, the gendered, the classes collide in symbolic combat. It is a fractured landscape of struggle and resistance, of border crossings of all descriptions, where margins meet in the center, where no human escapes without wounds, where engagements and withdrawals mark the day from dawn to nightfall where doubt pervades every encounter. (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. x)

They point to the experience of the journey of the pilgrimage, to the nature of my existence within the context of education (Pinar, 2000, p. 401).

The attempt was made in this chapter to uncover, and then reflect upon the tensions and methods associated with teaching critical/ liberatory pedagogy in a public alternative school, in an effort to foster pedagogical citizenship. Because the answers sought were located within the teacher himself, the research method chosen was Currere, an autobiographical methodology (Appendix A). The methodology was not a positivistic process and therefore finite answers to specific questions were not addressed. The process was designed to discover subtle currents and indications that may help understand teaching and subjecthood. The intent of this chapter was to lay bare the teaching experience and then reflect on some of the themes that arise. The overall direction of the process is indicated by the research statement listed before the Preface, but may retrieve far more information than will be necessary or far less. The

autobiographical methodology is not predictable and that is why it is needed for understanding the subject, which inherently was unpredictable.

The methodology (Appendix A) in this chapter consisted of journals that were collected during a portion of the semester at the target school, which were then reflected on once a temporal distance had been established. The process was designed to tease out hidden meanings and understandings that may not have been available during the initial collection experience.

Once the journals were compiled and reviewed, several themes were illuminated. The researcher has taken those themes as headers for the reflection phase of the autobiographical methodology. The themes are not the only themes that have presented themselves but they are the most profound. The selected journals were interpreted within the confines of those themes to facilitate understanding for the researcher and reader. The themes were: Finding A Voice, The Power Problem, Societal Holding Cell, An Activist Bent, The Punitive Structure, A Difficult Time, and A Critical Endeavour. The seven themes were narrative in design to promote multiple understandings. The order of the themes was not hierarchical. The journal entries have been left in their original forms, which include posts that were from recordings. The raw nature of the narrative and lack of punctuation, in some cases, helped the reader to feel the frustration and confusion. The notations for the journals are: AJ-for the action journals (Journals done when or right after an interesting occurrence) and FJ- for the forced journals (Journals done at a pre-set time, three days a week).

The attempt in this research is reiterated in the following research statement.

In particular I will seek to understand the process, principles and tensions of teaching citizenship and being a citizen, within a democracy as revealed in my own experience. Within this investigation emphasis will be placed on the teaching and/ or formation of self-regulation, subjecthood and the complex negotiations/ tensions that a subject/ teacher must make to help create the concrete breathing Collected Realized Self-governed Citizen.

Simply, I would like the reader to understand what follows is an intuitive investigation of one teacher's personal journey through several months of teaching. It is designed to be a creative effort at personal reflection and teaching effectiveness, in the hope that improvements will be envisioned and manifested in the process of producing innovative pedagogical understandings and citizenship.

Preface

Before the reflective process begins I think it would be appropriate to address the feelings that have arisen from the overview of the journals that were accumulated almost a year ago. The temporal distance has given me a platform from which to look back and assess the situation that was occurring as I was journaling. There are also some strong emotions that have surfaced from the overview process.

The initial process of reviewing the journals to provide the themes from which to base the autobiographical methodology (Appendix A) has been extremely painful. Interrogating something that you love is a difficult process. The school and the staff have provided me so much support and guidance on my quest to be a better educator. To read

the journals and feel my disappointment at some of the things going on at the school is painful. To see some brief hints of democracy was joyful. The staff that I worked with when I left the school in 2006 to pursue my doctorate had changed somewhat, but many of the key people still remained. However, it seems some of their educational precepts have changed. One of my new focuses in doing this research will be to help determine, if possible, what had changed in them, in just three short years.

I would also like to qualify that the comments made and concepts interrogated within this dissertation are my opinions of these events. I have not embarked on this procedure to cause additional pain to anyone other than myself, but rather to understand. The process may require a harsh dialogue between myself, the concepts, and the situations revealed in the journals. Let it be known from the beginning that this staff and school in its entirety has an overall effect, even with the comments made in this methodology, of helping the majority of its students reach a measure of educational success within the confines of the county and state rules to which they are legally bound. Much of what will be discussed are nuances that I have perceived from my original tenure at the school and my return. Also, once one has been exposed to critical pedagogy literature as I have been in the PhD program at UNCG, ones viewpoint is altered. I feel that now I am more prone as a researcher to see critically anything that I am exposed to, including my teaching and personal life.

Another point of concern is that my utopic vision of the school that I maintained from my original tenure has of course been affected. This caused me great concern when I was going through the original journaling process. It crushed me in the beginning to

realize that the school was not operating the way I remembered, the way that I had talked about in the PhD program. This realization began chipping away at my pedagogical self-esteem. Questions began to come up: Did I remember it correctly? Was I even a very good teacher when I was here last time? Do I just not remember how it "really" was? Did I paint myself as an awesome teacher when I was barely average? Did I really guide my previous students toward liberation? These questions kept creeping into my thinking and making me feel remorse or hesitancy about coming to work. This never happened before, but now I dreaded, on some days, even going to work. The insecurity felt is echoed through the raw journals and will be utilized in the intuitive process.

My father also passed away during the time that I was away from the school. I now live in his house. I do not know what effect this actually had on my cognitive process, but I am sure there are some factors and emotions from this that I am also processing.

All these factors have made the autobiographical process painful and in turn thought provoking. These are the initial thoughts I have, before I actually begin the analysis process. Some of these themes may be alluded to again in the introspection, but I feel that it is appropriate to give my feelings about how I perceive the process before I start, because the emotions are very strong.

Reflection Process

To reiterate the seven themes in the reflection process are: Finding A Voice, The Power Problem, Societal Holding Cell, An Activist Bent, The Punitive Structure, A Difficult Time, and A Critical Endeavour.

Finding A Voice

One of the first nuances noticed from the initial journal views was that students

and teachers voices were trying to break through a system that values silence. It is

profound in Critical pedagogy that the oppressed find their "voice". That they are moved

from objecthood to subjecthood, eventually finding their own motivation, and work

toward their liberation. What if their voice is seen as profanity? Domination requires

controlling the voice. The school system seems to be able to control the dialogue that is

considered proper or standard and that can control the voice. In many instances in the

school, students are chastised for trying to express themselves by using profanity, or

profanity mixed with other words. Why is profanity so problematic, especially in an

alternative school? If the profanity is mixed with other speech, the teachers, this year,

tend to just hear profanity and silence that. In so doing, they silence the entire voice of

the student.

> *10-15 AJ*
> *Students and cussing. It is strange that cussing does not seem to have anything to
> do with the learning environment, but we police cuss words and students can get
> into a great deal of trouble from cussing. It is very difficult for me to get angry or
> make the student get in trouble for cussing. Students use these cuss words, some
> of them anyway use the words as part of the ordinary conversation. Without the
> intent to cuss at you, is it really wrong. I have problems taking punitive actions
> against students that cuss because I do not really think that they mean anything
> negative by it. Popular culture is loaded with cusswords. I do not understand
> why we have to police the kids as they cuss in school, when the networks do not
> police their actors cussing. The kids see their most popular stars cussing in their
> everyday conversation and we expect them to change their language when they
> come to work.*
> *Even people who don't cuss have stocks or bonds in corporations that make
> money with movies and TV and other forms of entertainment that allow cussing.*

The above journal entry shows my concern about how students get in multiple instances of trouble when they cuss in school and how I do not feel that so much punitive emphasis should be placed on these words. I also stress that multiple media sources have cussing in them and in that media plays an extensive role in everyone's lives, even people that do not cuss. The greatest problem with having such a punitive emphasis on cussing is that it may be the only means of expression a child has for showing discomfort or pain. If we silence the student then we can never create the trust and bridge to meet the student where they are. In critical pedagogy it is so important that the members that are trying to understand their cultural surroundings trust the facilitators and teachers who are presenting the process. If we are constantly chastising students for cussing we will destroy their trust, because to them it is their main means of communication. If this occurs there is no hope of helping a student think critically. It is very difficult to think critically if the dialogue is being censored. If you make their voice profane, then they have no choice but not to communicate. How are we going to teach the students to think critically if they cannot speak or ask questions? Not to mention that this particular school should have a means of dealing with this occurrence creatively and usefully because it is an "alternative" school that should be designed at least to create communication from the teacher to the student, otherwise how are we ever as teachers going to help these students move through the curriculum. The school even though it is alternative is still heavily weighted toward the "normal" rule following student.

Even for a teacher trained in critical pedagogy, giving students a voice can be difficult. In the course of a day teachers hear things that they do not want to hear. In an

alternative school, this happens also. In the journal statement below, I indicate that I am tired of hearing all their stories. I should want to hear their stories, to make contact with them. Why do I what them to be silent? Even if I hear them talk over and over. Could it be that I too like the power that comes from my ability to create silence in a room? Some students have no one to talk to except their teacher. When I read this it seemed strange to me, that as a teacher teaching in an alternative school I would even make a statement like this. In the journal entry it does not say what the child was talking about, and I can't remember exactly the incident, but if I mentioned it in the Action Journal the student must have been getting on my nerves. I included it to show that in all cases we remain human, even if we are the most understanding and listening teacher we still have days when we want our students to "shut up and sit down".

> *10-30 AJ*
> *The students also want to tell me many different stories that I do not want to hear.*

Many students in our school do not have the ability to see themselves in the future with the decisions that they are making. When the consequences come down on them they tend to make excuses about their behavior. This occurs in school and everywhere, but I have noticed that these students seem to have a mental block or have never been able to learn the ability to see themselves in the future. Are the directives merely an attempt for society to control their thought? Are the consequences punishments for thinking? Are the consequences punishments for dreaming of the future, a future where they could be inventive and change society?

10-30 AJ
The students don't seem to understand the consequences that they incur from not following directives. It is sad that they rationalize all their behavior. But they do have a point in some of their concerns.

Some of what we hear in the above statement is that they are resisting, one of the essences of citizenship. But they cannot see the consequences that affect their future. Is the risk of not having a free future greater than the risk of punishing them?

If students could express their concerns, there would be cussing, but they could say why they were angry about the punishment. They may also be able to articulate why it was not fair, but most of the time the analysis was superficial. The students would not be able to tell me exactly what was causing their disruptive behavior, where the pressure originated that caused the discomfort. As a teacher I could see the need for critical theory in the schools, so students could pinpoint the locale of their distress (i.e. poverty, racism). The arguments of the students most of the time did not use any rational premise or critique that was critically plausible. Is critical theory feared by the state, because it would point out so much class disparity?

I was constantly being barraged by students that semester who wanted to talk. I think that my partner teacher and I were the only teachers in the school that were having rational discussions with the students. The Principal and Assistant Principal had discussions with them but I think because of their position they were not able to get as much out of the students as we were due to our less punitive positions as teachers. The below journal article mentions some of the ways that we tried to create space where the

students could initiate their own dialogue. Without the creation of a "rupture" or a space

to push the dominating structure back critical thought cannot happen.

> *12-06 AJ*
> *One of the students was not allowed to go back to her home school because*
> *another student was afraid of her. The home principal agreed and decided that*
> *she could not go back. This upset the student because she has met all of her*
> *goals, and expected to go back.*
> *The student has no body to advocate for them with the Principal at the home*
> *school. The guardian is not receptive to helping the student out right now in her*
> *life. So therefore she will not go to the principal's office and try to persuade. She*
> *is all alone in her educational quest.*
> *Our principal is trying to work on ways for her to go to school and work at the*
> *same time, because she will drop out if she does not go back, because of the*
> *location of the school. Our school is several miles out of town and it would be*
> *difficult for her to work because of the long bus ride.*

> *We went and talked to the principal about the possibility of her going back, but*
> *with all the bulling polices enforced at schools, it would not happen.*
> *The student came to me and wanted to write a letter to the principal about the*
> *issue. I let her write the letter and helped her with some syntax. It was a good*
> *letter, I hope that it helps. I was proud that she decided to do it without any*
> *prompting. She also was not mad, because of what happened and was able to*
> *focus on the problem to try to resolve it. This made all the difference in the*
> *world.*

The profound moment in this incident was when she decided to write a letter on her own

without any prompting from either of the teachers, a subjective moment. I feel that

because I was able to help advocate for her by talking to the principal this gave her the

needed confidence to make the leap to try to help herself. I saw a budding responsibility

and this made me feel good about the liberatory possibilities of this incident. On a sad

note the principal from her home school did not take her back, and she dropped out of

school, even with all the work we did with her. The student's possibilities and social

imaginary became constricted at that moment. Did the principal understand her decision?

In the following entries I worked with a couple of students to help them move

through their problems. I tried to be a critical model when I was working with them to

help them see critical thinking being used with their specific problems. The advantage of

our school was that with the small class size I was able to help them in some cases

because I had the TIME to do so. Time is one of the demands of democracy. A citizen

has to have time to investigate and reflect on themselves and their society, where better to

learn it then have it modeled by teachers in a classroom? In a regular school that would

not be possible with 30-40 students in your room. In many cases liberatory thinking

takes a good amount of time, because one has to process from their own experiences.

The following journals indicate our ability to manipulate our time, a democratic function.

11-2 FJ
As we chatted he calmed down and we were able to continue class. It took
approximately 40 minutes out of a 75 min. class. But at least he calmed down and
did not get in any more trouble. He never said that he appreciated the talk, but I
could tell from his attitude the rest of the day that he looked at me differently.
Just giving him some voice.

11-6 AJ
Plus she needed to talk to someone in-depth about her life. I was only able to
scratch the surface. I could see an awesome kid, under that posturing, someone
that could help society.
She wasn't bad at all, just misguided. She needed time to reflect. Reflection on
one's life can be the key. What can I do to help them reflect?

In some cases reflection can take form of art. If I was too busy in class then I would give

them a blank sheet of paper and some markers. I would then be able to get my lesson

started so I could devote some time to their problem.   Does practice in critical thinking give you the tools to address issues that spring up in your class? Yes. Do teacher education programs prepare teachers for this type of work? Not much maybe one class. Do teachers at this school practice this skill? No. In most cases their problems happened outside my class, so they would be angry when they came into class. The below journal entry relates how I did this type of activity. If they do not have a voice, then art can be an easy way to help them express their feelings and give them the voice they need. But these types of strategies sometimes do not work and the below is an example of the additional liberatory work that may have to be included to get to the root of the issues.

11-12 FJ
Stacy was having a problem she would not talk about it..so I did not have much time so I just kind of let her vent then got the class going. I gave her a sheet of paper and told her just to doodle and that might help her feel better. So I went on about my class with her mumbling in the background. When class was over she was sitting with this piece of paper with this writing all over it. I went over to her desk and the piece of paper said "I hate liars" it was written all over the paper. I tried to get her to talk about it but to no avail. I did find out that somehow it had to do with me and my team teacher across the hall.
She was still a bit mad when she left and went to her next class. She did not like her next teacher at all and proceeded to get into trouble. She insulted the teacher then walked out. I get word of this when she does not show up for another class. One of the other students came up to me and told me that she told them that my team teacher and I had somehow lied to her about how we were going to handle a situation. I was not sure what she was talking about, but went to talk to my team teacher.
The issue was about something that we told her we would keep a secret but we had to tell the administration. We did not realize that it would cause so much problems, it had to do with a girl that she liked that she was harassing a bit, who was straight.
I decided that we needed to address that situation head on, because that is the way she would have liked. I called her in and brought it up, she said that we had lied to her because we told on her. I told her that other teachers had brought it up that we just confirmed it and that we were supposed to take care of it..we sat down and had a long talk with her about her life, (she told me about how mean

her aunt was, in depth and how bad her life had been. She basically was groundless. She did not have anyone to count on…this is when the story of the gangs come in, she got help from a gang leader and that is how she became a blood. She was not accepted in society being a "stud" and being poor. He accepted her and brought her the latest shoes and there she became grounded. She only felt responsible to him and her friends.

There seems to be a lack of responsibility due to this misplaced grounding or something like that…

Me and the partner teacher spent the better part of an hour listening to her and discussing the situation with her. She made tremendous points and I liked the fact that she had spark. She stood up for what she thought. We discussed it later that day after the students left and I decided to talk to the principal.

There is not enough time to deal with all the students the way we dealt with Stacy that day. It seems like we are fighting a losing battle, with the curriculum taking up depth and the extra problems that are added because of all the new rules, taking up time that could be used for more productive purposes.

I went into my classroom after talking to my partner teacher and put Stacy's paper up on the wall with all the other artwork the students made for me…to remind me about being a confidant. How do you know what to tell the administration and what to keep to yourself?

In the above journal entry you can see how even with some experience at trying to create liberatory situations there are mistakes and problems that can occur. It is not a completely mapped out process. To be a teacher, one must be able to be flexible in both methods and understanding of each student, because both may have to be fluid and change in a second. The above entry also shows that you need to be prepared for your method to not have the desired effect and have additional strategies that you can draw on if needed. I have my partner teacher who has a whole different method of teaching and delivery, but for some reason we fit together. We became partner teachers on our own, so that we could help each other out in an emergency like the one above. If we had not addressed the student as quickly as we did she may never have trusted us again. You can also see the amount of time that it takes to try to produce these insights. Without the

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school's flexible scheduling and small class size we would not have been able to have this talk and work on the issues with which the student was wrestling.

In the democratic school, discursive time is never a problem. Because there is not a set curriculum as a teacher you could stop or the student could stop instruction and begin a discourse on a topic that concerned them. That is a huge difference between the democratic school philosophy and the public school system.

In Liberatory pedagogy as a teacher you have to be looking for spaces where the students are experiencing issues that can be resolved or addressed with critical thinking. This can be a difficult task with all the other duties that the teacher has going on in the course of a day. Teaching in a public school is a highly controlled activity. From the content to the movement, time is in short supply. The best strategy a liberatory teacher can do is to develop a reputation for listening. This turns out to be, in many instances, one of my most useful accomplishments, because even if I miss the fact that a student is in distress they will, in many cases, ask for help if they know you might listen to them. I want to mention here that, as mentioned in one of the first journal entries in this section, even if I am a good listener it doesn't mean I always want to listen. But in most cases it is part of my learned communication style.

The below entry shows that, although the student was having distress, I did not even perceive it. Why did I miss it? The principal called him into her office and he would only talk to me. Once the conversation was initiated we learned all kinds of information about what this student was going through at home. Once the parent and brother of the student came in for a conference, just from the conversation there were

four or five people, in the office, in tears as we listened to their story. This brings up that fact that to understand someone's "voice" you have to be empathic, a precursor to the collected citizen.

11-16 FJ
-one of my first period students is always late and spends a great deal of time in the bathroom, when I asked him about it he said that he didn't like to go to the bathroom when people were in there.
He would not talk to the principal only to me so she brought me in later on in the day to talk to him. I started asking a few questions about it and found out that he had no water in his house. The water bill had not been paid for a while and it was like 300 dollars. How does a water bill get 300 dollars? But anyway, I told the principal and she called his mother and wanted her to come in for a conference.
The mother showed up and we talked about what was going on in her house. It seems that most of the burden of the household was on the 15 year olds shoulders. His mom was not well and he had to look after his sisters baby, who was keeping him up at night and he was not able to go to school. Plus there was not water so he could not take a shower.
He was spending extra time in the bathroom because he was freshening up when no one was in there so he would not smell during school.
The principal offered to try to recover some of the credits he would fail because of attendance and pay for his water bill and try to alleviate some of the pressure on him so that he could be successful. It felt like a day in the old school.
I am leaving today with a smile, one of the few times this year so far.

Helping students find their voices can be difficult. In a later journal post, I had the students write an autobiography. The liberatory aspects of this are discussed in a later section. But a student chose to write about sexually explicit moments in her life. As I read this I was horrified, that it was sitting right there on the paper all these graphic experiences. I did not know what to do, so I just let it go on for a few days, but kept the copies of the autobiographies on a flash drive that I took home with me. I discuss this several times in later sections -- it was one of these "moments" in the school year. So

even if you give the student a place to express their voice in the hope for liberation you may be shocked at what you get from that student.

> *11-30 FJ*
> *Thinking about the autobiography on the weekend made me somewhat paranoid that someone would find it and read the one that was pornographic, so I decided to have a talk with her. I sat her down and told her that I wanted her to work on another story in her life that was less graphic. She said that I lied to her again (Stacy) and if I made her change the story she would not do the assignment. But by 4th period the class that they were going to work on it she was in trouble so I didn't have to worry with it today. But it will return, what do I do?*

From this entry my distress is seen, I am not sure what to do, but I thought that this assignment was helping her work through some of her difficulties. But it was scary as a teacher to allow a student to write in such a manor. Why am I so afraid? Could it be because of the content control of the state school system? Would they understand? Do I have the courage to let them?

This brings up the fact that teachers are so confined by the rules and regulations of teaching even thought they are supposed to be there to protect the student. In the democratic schools I would not be under such scrutiny therefore if I wanted to breech an issue such as this I could without fear of losing my job.

One of the most profound things I have learned in the years I have been teaching is that good thought sometimes has a gestation period. It many times does not happen on the spot but requires reflection. That is one of the central tenets of critical pedagogy, is that one must reflect back upon themselves to understand. This reflection takes time.

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Below you can see a student that I had most of the semester but just started opening up to me on December 4th. It took a great deal of time for him to trust me. I had a bad beginning of the week and the student's communication brightened my day and the rest of my week. As I was processing this journal I realized how much the teacher gets out of doing critical work. The communication must provide stimulation for the teacher also, because this particular discourse made me feel much better.

> *12-4 FJ*
> *I feel a bit better then on Wednesday. We have had some great discussions and one of the students in my US history class said that he liked talking to me, that I made sense. It was kind of like a vote of confidence. He was talking to me about how much trouble he was having with his mom and how mean she was. It was very easy to connect with this kid.*
> *When he came into class, he was so big and looked mean as hell, but he really has turned out to be cool. He is a bit sensitive. Most of the kids here are very sensitive. Because they have gone through so much they can easily be disappointed or have their feelings hurt. I can think of several times I have hurt Jims feelings not on purpose, but with something I said just in class. It is that sometimes you just don't have time to process everything that is said so you can give careful answers. There is that idea of time again, no time. The last time I made Jim mad I just raised my voice because I wanted him to hurry up. He was fiddling around and not finishing something. He got very upset, hard to have a six foot 3 big boy upset. I had to take him out of the class and have a chat with him. Once we were one on one he was better. He said he thought I was "dissing" him or that I didn't like him anymore. Which was strange that he exposed such a sensitive side. I think most of these kids the reason why they get in so much trouble is because they get angry so fast.*
> *And if you don't have much time in the classroom to give them, they feel like they are getting blown off. Which is how Jim described it the first time he got mad. When he gets mad he shuts down and will not talk. Sometimes I just let him leave and then I hunt him down in another class, hoping he does not get in trouble in the meantime. It is very difficult to read him.*
> *But lately he seems to be getting some thicker skin, I pick on him quite regularly and he told me that I was the best listener ever. I took that as a compliment. I feel better today, because of Jims talk and how he said I had helped him relate. I asked him if there was a specific incident and he said it was just how I was, I made him comfortable and smart. I pressed him on this but that was about all I got, I was hoping for something specific, nope.*

He was a good student and had one of the best grades in my US history class, some pretty good recall and understanding.
I feel better today! I seem to be like the kids, all I needed was a vote of confidence!

It can be seen from this entry some of my thinking on how I was dealing with Jim. I use a great deal of humor in the classroom, humor if used correctly seems to bypass all kinds of protective strategies that students have erected around themselves and link you right to their hearts, but it can be dangerous, as mentioned in the post, because you must be careful not to hurt their feelings. Is humor paramount to democracy? Is the ability to laugh at oneself and others necessary for this type of teaching?

Voice seems to be one of the democratic processes that on a limited scale, me and my partnership teacher are able to stimulate in this school. It is one of our democratic successes but is only available to the few that reside in our classes. It is also limited for them due to the packaged curriculum that requires so much time and memorization. Without voice how can a democratic citizen help understand and created a public viewpoint that is reflective? Without practice in the use of this voice how will a citizen communicate their own future?

<u>The Power Problem</u>

Many of the Action Journals describe perceptions of me being perceived as a powerful or weak teacher in the classroom. Power, as Freire discusses, is the essence of liberation -- to perceive yourself as powerful enough to change your status in life. Power for the oppressor is a given. I don't know if I feel guilty about having power or guilty about not having enough. The power that the oppressor wields is addicting and feels

normal. I chose to include power in a section because this is an issue that since I began

the reflective process I have been noticing my feeling of power displacement. It could

mean that I am doing my job as a critical scholar to displace the power of the oppressor.

But it is very uncomfortable. Why am I uncomfortable? The post below comments on

this the first day I was journaling.

> *10- 2 AJ*
> *there is also a struggle I have with myself of the fact with students perceive me as weak or not for not actually taking the points off for cussing or for doing various acts which I consider very minor in the scope of what I wanted to learn about society themselves but I do constantly struggle with the fact that I might be considered weak as a person and what does that mean in my life in my teaching to be considered strong or weak it's an interesting question I would like to explore further but why is that important to me what difference does it make whether the what their perception of my strength or weakness would be and how that would actually input or impacts my classroom.*

As a critical teacher I should not be as concerned about my power in the

classroom, more in the student's power. But I think it stems from the idea of respect. If

your students do not respect you then it is hard for them to take what you say as having

value. Respect in many of their eyes, from my experience, comes from strength. Is this

something that I believe because I am part of the oppression? If I am perceived as weak

then my overall effectiveness as a teacher may be in question. Could this be related to

masculinity? In the following journals I am very concerned with having a balance of

respect to leniency so that a critical, liberatory foundation can be created. That is the way

I couch it, but the question remains. Am I just uncomfortable throwing off the power of

the state and reducing my own power? Is it an issue of masculinity? Or is this an

excuse?

10-2 AJ
*Friday afternoon power struggles in the classroom to continue as struggles
between students and myself for domination on an interesting because they seem
to want to try to glean power from using cuss words which I use the point sheet
which I don't normally take off for cussing as long as the cussing is not for long
periods of time and expounding very loudly but I try to take off for because it is
one of the ways that they seem to use for a type of expounding or explaining but it
also does tend to be a power struggle with myself to say that I should take off
points for it to so I tend to work with that over and over again in the power
structure of the classroom the idea that which I love walking beside your student
is much more difficult ....student attitudes and rules all the time even though many
of the rules do not really matter to me so I was thinking it's interesting how
cussing which is so non-important to me outside of the classroom is somewhat
important to me inside the classroom and how I've run the fine line of realizing
that ,you know, am I doing them a disservice by not, not collectively taking off a
large amount of points for cussing so they know that's not acceptable to me in a
business atmosphere.*

From this Action Journal, my discomfort is apparent. I am not sure where the line is that

I must make to have order in the classroom, but leave the class the ability to create a

"voice" for themselves. I still wrestle with this issue. As mentioned in the Critical

Pedagogy chapter (2) teacher hierarchy (an authoritarian framework) has to be reduced

for critical pedagogy to work. It is hard to determine in practice what is "enough"

authority. Am I doing the right thing by reducing my power? I do not think that

someone trying to teach critically can ever release this problem. Because the line cannot

be concrete it must be movable, but in doing so a great deal of ambiguity is caused. The

ambiguity is from never knowing if you are creating the correct balance. The balance

that creates order, but allows for freedom of expression, is very difficult to maintain.

This problem is a truly human experience, and is necessary when doing any type of

liberatory work.

The next few posts are additional examples of the same problem of me trying to

balance my discipline to creativity.

> *11-18 AJ*
> *to use the example of a cussing in the public school system now it's against the rules of the students say well you know cuss words are just words really mean anything anymore they don't mean the original connotations really of the kids when they use them so why is it considered a bad word and we were discussing in the office about you know the fact that we don't use our ruby pain poverty training in reality to get the kids from cussing we just simply think about it and the point sheet becomes difficult to deduct a point for cussing then they blow up and then they become unmanageable at that point you can't teach anybody classic is now everybody's unmanageable so how do we alleviate the tension or not tensions but how do we alleviate the fact that we want the kids to stop cussing to know that they can't cuss when they go to a job interview but they cannot consistently cussing in the class and we don't necessarily want a third of them out or I don't necessarily want to throw them out of the class because then they're not learning anything out of the particular class and not learning anything.*

The democratic schools authority problems are handled as a collective not putting so

many burdens on the teacher or administrator to have to create the balance. The

community creates the balance. It also, I feel, creates more personal responsibility on

both sides. The teacher does not have to have the burden of responsibility and the student

can feel the weight of the responsibility of their own behavior. The weight of the

decisions being shouldered on the teacher comes at a high cost to both teacher and

student. I echo the sentiment in the next journal post.

> *12-17 AJ*
> *It seems that discipline has to come at the cost of something from the student and from the teacher. There were many problems in my day today..from students not doing what I wanted …from them just being rude to me. It is funny because if you asked them they would probably tell you I was their favorite teacher. But then they do not treat me well. It is a shame that it is always an expense for teacher and student.*

Sometimes there are direct power struggles not as much dealing with "voice" but with the attempt to have personal power in a life that is powerless. Powerlessness is part of the idea of mass forgetting of collective power struggles mentioned in Chapter 1. The collected power of groups to see domination, rise up and protest, to create change. Why do these students perceive that they have so little power? I try to cultivate their ability to see their own power. I have this notion of "spark" that lends me to try as best to maintain the "feisty" attitude of a student if possible. The "spark" is a student's ability to create resistance to a perceived dominating influence. I do not want in any way to crush their personality because the people with "spark" are the ones that stand up for other people or do heroic things and I feel it is my job to cultivate that with responsibility. Resistance and responsibility are some of the characteristics of the collected realized citizen. This is a difficult task at best and from the journal post below it can be seen how I am wresting with it.

> *10-5 AJ*
> *It is very difficult not to get angry when students tell you the teacher to be quiet. Why does this bother me? What has that got to do with teaching? If I am indeed bothering the student with my comments, why would I not want to be quiet? Is it about power and the dynamic of the classroom? Could it be that I was raised in an autocratic classroom, and I need to know that I am in charge? Am I really in charge of their learning? I do believe that they themselves need to be in charge of their own learning. They need to make the decision to learn, to know, that this information is valuable.*
> *The experience must be valid, but how about the power relations? If they can't get used to an autocratic classroom how are they going to learn to have a boss that tells them what to do? Am I doing the students a disservice by being too lenient? I feel that I ride the fence on this issue. My patience is very strong and in most cases I don't mind having a student talk back to me but in some instances it makes me angry. When in reality why would it make me angry, they are trying to find their own way to express their own desires and concerns. It means that*

they are willing to stand up to themselves and actually confront the world on its
own terms. Is that good or will it make them unemployable? Or could it make
them self motivators that create their own jobs?

The simple humanity in my post is evident; I am wrestling with the power dynamics in

the classroom. I do this every day, even now. I came to understand that you cannot teach

liberation or responsibility without modeling the ability to make finite moral decisions.

The problem with having to do this as related earlier is that it is extremely difficult and

one has to reflect on it often.

Another example is located in the posts below but I am couching the reflections

with the idea that the students won't like me as a person. All teachers, if they are

teaching well, have these same thoughts when reflecting on their teaching and wrestle

with these same judgments on themselves.

10-6 AJ
once they were back in my classroom when maybe I should've taken off points
because they understand that they're not doing something that's correct and is it
my fear of not being liked as a teacher, my fear of them not doing well, is it my
fear of the idea that once they are upset than they will really not want to do
anything the rest of class which has happened before with points and point sheets,
so how do I confront this particular issue with my students do I tell them that this
is my new experiment that I'm going to take off points when you do not listen to
me directly when I tell you to hush up or just silently take off points at the end and
have them mad when they leave but not the mad when they come back the next
day maybe or some might hold a grudge through the next day but they do know
they're being wrong at some of the personal affront to them when you do take
points off maybe unless you take points consistently over over over and over
again.

10-6 AJ
in a computer lab when you're sharing classes with several teachers will so what
does that mean so far as my own struggle with you now want them to be free in
their thinking and be able to say things but I also want it to be quiet when it needs

to be quiet so people can contemplate concepts or thoughts that they're currently working on or that we have been working on or that I have exposed them to do.

The above examples listed have to do with my interactions with the students. The post below refers to our counselor's interaction. Many of the issues that came to my classroom had very little to do with me. Many times the other staff members would use their power to silence a student and the repercussion would fall back on me because I had initiated the contact. Below is a post that mentions that type of occurrence. Often as a critical teacher you were unraveling and helping a student understand something that had happened to them because of another member of the staff.

> *11-6 AJ*
> *Another teacher and I decided to have the counselor talk to one of the students. The counselor said that would be fine and took the student to her office. When the student returned the counselor said everything was ok.*
> *The student sat down and once the counselor was gone started talking about how the other teacher and I were two-faced. She was extremely angry and was completely consumed by her anger. The counselor was must have mentioned that we wanted her to talk to the student. She must have just talked and not let the student talk.*

The above post becomes an important example of democratic thinking that involves occurrences that may not have anything to do with you but falls within your realm of judgment. How can it be handled? Can these situations be recognized without practice?

Many times in the classroom even when you are trying to use your power to do the right thing it can be misperceived by the students. At least I felt it was the right thing to stop the student from bullying the other student. But what occurred was an insightful moment. The students, because they were mad at me, called me a "snitch". I picked up,

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as related in the post below, that with this comment they perceived me at least in the

beginning as on "their side". I can remember as I wrote this entry how comforting this

idea, that their perception that normally I was on their side, was for me as a critical

teacher.

12-9 FJ
I was going over some notes and noticed that a student was making fun of another
student by writing down stuff on a piece of paper. The student was drawing
pictures of the other student....well the student got mad and started positioning
himself to start a disturbance. I told the students that I did not have much
patience that day. This was due to some family stuff that was going on at home.
The student continued antagonizing the other student and I wrote him up. Now I
don't normally write students up but I was not in the mood this morning, to put up
with a great deal of bantering. So once it got started I wanted to nip it in the bud.
After I sent the student out with a write up...the other students had a strange
reaction. They perceived me as "being a snitch" as they said. This actually
changed my attitude a bit and I said, that I could not be a snitch because I was a
part of the establishment in that I worked for the state. I also reintegrated that I
liked the principal a great deal and even though I did not agree with everything
that was going on at the school I still respected her rules and decisions..(wow this
brings up another topic). So if I wrote someone up I was not a snitch, because it
was impossible for me to be a snitch. Because I was already a part of the
teaching staff.
This leads to an interesting question, why did they perceive me as one of them and
not the "other" teaching establishment. I caught onto this relatively quickly and
started asking them some questions. Why do you think that I am one of you?
What in my teaching allows you to relate to me? Why do you feel so comfortable
with me that you perceive me as a student?
So I concentrated on these questions. The answers were varied. Most equated me
as being "with" them and not "against" them...or "for" them. They understood
that I was a teacher, but that they perceived that I was one of them. I tried to
qualify the answers but was not able to pinpoint an exact word that they could
come up with that would give me a definitive answer.

As I talked to the students, about why they thought I was with them, they could not really

pinpoint why they thought this. It must be the way that I relate to them as students. I

also believe that I have a vision of what they could be, as mentioned earlier in the

dissertation. (If you think someone can be great, then you treat them differently than if you think they are a criminal.) After looking at this entry, I feel that this idea may be why the teachers treat the students differently now than they did before, I think their internal image of these students has changed. They have begun to look at students from an objective stance (as an object) and not a subjective stance (as a subject). This would be an interesting proposition to do further research. It is the essence of critical pedagogy and democratic thinking.

The final post in this section is one of the times in my writing where I do a few sentences to reinforce from my own reflective capacity how I think about students and why I feel they try to exert their power in the classroom. These little statements are reminders of what, exactly I am trying to do.

12-17 AJ
It is funny though the more that I write about it the less it bothers me. They are so young and they know so little. It is difficult to remember that they have no power, other than themselves.

Societal Holding Cell

There are several concepts that are noted in this next section. I included this as a topic because some of the main influence these students have occur outside the classroom from the hegemonic structures in society. I titled this section Societal Holding Cell because I feel that many of society's influences are like a prison cell that can be escaped with the correct tools, the tools of critical pedagogy.

When I returned to the school from my three-year graduate study I found an increase in gang type talk and symbolism. I was only gone for three years and the

difference is very noticeable. Gang activity at our school was minimal with just a few

students mainly "faking" the gang talk to try to garnish power. But now it seems to be

more sincere and dangerous.

If you build a liberatory dialogue in your classroom then students are more apt to

communicate with you. The below journal post is an indicator of how the student will

even discuss some of the most revealing problems and occurrences if you give them

space.

> *10-19 FJ*
> *Today in my us history class several things happened that caused concern. Stacy*
> *my student that I am fond of came in upset. There seemed to be some kind of*
> *gang stuff going on (she was supposedly a Blood) but someone was saying that*
> *they were a crip and she new otherwise and confronted them on it. I asked her*
> *about the gangs and she said...Mr. g we can talk about it later.*

She later discussed her position in the gangs with me. It was a heartfelt discussion and I

appreciated her candor. The conversation helped me understand her more clearly. I was

able to tailor our later conversations to address the problem of gangs and their cost to

society, but also my understanding of their existence. These conversations gave my later

opinions and suggestions more weight, because I had taken the time to have the

preliminary talks that set the stage for later critical work and discourse. Freire mentions

how work in critical pedagogy always has preliminary work to familiarize the teacher

with his/ her students and their unique situations. Why would the schools not open up to

talking about the gangs rather than just suppressing their symbols? Is gang talk one of

the dangerous places mentioned in Chapter 1?

When I was initially reading the journal entries, the idea that schools were places

to hold kids so that they could be controlled kept bubbling up in my mind. The holding

cell was a complete counter stance to democratic life. The below journal post describes

how I feel trapped with my students, in this particular place in society. The nuance of

this entry is that we have the students here to crush their curiosity and learning desires, so

that they can be managed, and be good workers. They cannot think of creative new

things because we have taught them that someone will deliver the answer to them. As a

teacher, the feeling that you are part of a system that makes kids not want to learn brings

about despair and sorrow.

11-7 AJ
my first journal today was rather discouraging in fact I feel like leaving the
school I am at because actually I don't think any of the students there want or feel
like it's necessary to learn any history and although I try to work with them and
help them understand history is very important I haven't used the correct method
because they certainly don't believe that and I don't… to have a very loose rules
structure so now that they're just completely misbehaving so do I completely clear
the classroom and start again with one student and then the limit all their
learning even if they're getting a small amount of learning or do I continue with
what I'm doing which I think is ineffective in making me feel bad about myself and
about teaching in general so now I come to the point where I wish that were
educational system made kids want to learn instead of making kids not want to
learn being totally resistant to any kind of education for the simple fact that they
just don't want to learn because we kind of, it seems made them feel like they have
to learn, this is the most important thing that they need to do and they have to do
it where as we know psychologically things that you have to do you don't
necessarily want to do and so are we taking away their joy for learning are we
really take away they come to us a question mark And then they leave as a period
Are really taking the joy of learning away from these kids, or is that not possible
so again I feel better than I did this morning but I still don't feel very well because
I still feel like it's futile I guess the few that are learning I could leave them in the
class and kick the rest of the kids out of class because they don't seem to be
learning at all I just don't know what to do.

The fact that most teachers that I have talked to, especially the teachers who espouse some kind critical work, have the tensions mentioned above that on occasion overcome them and create despair. I am no different than any other teacher -- despair is only an instant away depending on the amount of pressure the teacher is placing on the system. To be a critical pedagogue you encounter the risk of despair over and over, especially if you work in a school or district that has rigid rules about their curriculum. The despair comes from the constant force you are applying critically and the answers that bubble up and reveal deficiency in the system. When you are in the classroom at a concrete level dealing with students those deficiencies stand out. The fact that, as a teacher you have very little power to change them on a systemic level, causes such tension that can lead to despair. The risk, as Freire comments, is always a part of the critical process, both for the student and teacher. I can see that inherent risk is part of democracy, also. The risk is that you could make things worse or cause a great deal of pain that might not produce any change.

Another cause of tension is the fact that as a teacher I have seen students that just are not suited to the public school system. These students are not functional sitting in a classroom and would be more suited to apprenticeships and other educational vehicles, processes that require bodily movement. The next journal post describes such an individual and my irritation with a system that makes him come to school in effect, wasting his time, holding him.

> *12-8 AJ*
> *The child had his head down because he has missed too many days and will not*
> *pass, due to bus suspensions and absences. Therefore he felt that he should not*

work because he is not getting any credit anyway.   He is 15 sixteen soon and he wants to drop out and work with his stepdad pluming.   It is understandable that he does not want to work, because there is really no reward he can fathom. This is a case when compulsory schooling is not appropriate.

He has also supposedly got his girlfriend pregnant and will have to take care of her. He and I talked for a long time today about responsibility. He said that he could be responsible if he was allowed to work full time. He does not function well in school at all. Today he got in-trouble for sleeping, but the state makes him come to school. I think from discussing all the different things that he enjoys..hunting, fishing and plumbing/earning money..that he just shouldn't be in school now other than some kind of trade school.

It has been my observations that this young man is being crushed by the system because he is not conforming. He has bright eyes, but every day they seem dimmer.

When we showed the codifications of various jobs, he made the comment that he was already there, not that he needed to think about his future, he would be living it if we let him.

I am naturally skeptical when students say they are ready to get a job, but the student I am discussing above is ready and has worked full time over the past few summers. He will be taking over his dad's plumbing business and his dad would love his help. He is not sixteen yet so he cannot drop out of school and work. He has gotten in trouble several times for truancy and for fighting, there is not one rational argument that I can make to help him understand about having a high school diploma, because he simply doesn't need one at this time in his life. The apprenticeships in the democratic schools would have been perfect for him because he would feel like he was doing something productive with his time. He may have tried other trades and not just plumbing, just to see if he really wanted to be a plumber. But in our public system we do not have the options or the power to demand these types of curricular structures on a local level because these ancient processes (apprenticeships or learning by doing) that are completely valid educational functions are not valued in the public school enterprise. In

the democratic school he could have finished his high school diploma and tried other occupations, instead he dropped out at the end of last year when he turned 16 so he would not get in-trouble and would stop wasting his time. We failed him.

Another unique power problem that came to my attention stems from the absence of personal power on the part of the student. There are two distinct dynamics that critical inquiry points out in this situation. Our students have been given so little power that they actually seem to feel no responsibility. The fact that they are allowed only a small fraction of power that seems in this instance to make them dependant. The following journal entry indicates that the students' language choices reflect that power is from without, randomly enforced without any input from them. The post describes when students get in-trouble they "catch" that trouble, in the form of getting caught. The problem is twofold, one they do not perceive their action as causing the crime and two the fault is getting caught. Both these dynamics are not productive for democracy, because they are not responsible stances. As indicated in the democratic schools, responsibility is maintained with the self through the community. The description in the following post negates these ideals.

> *10-23 FJ*
> *The students indicated that they could "catch" a charge here. There is not responsibility in "catching" a charge. Like a cold a criminal charge you could catch at our school like a cold, depending on how you dealt with the teachers. We talked at length about this concept. They did not understand that some of the charge was their doing. The whole idea that criminal charges were a deterrent was in question with this notion. How were these kids ever going to live responsibly if they thought charges had nothing to do with their behavior? It makes criminal action feasible, because the only problem is if you get caught, not that you are doing the crime. I wonder if it is because they are not dealt with consistently.*

The students ended up not really ever coming to understand criminality. How were they ever going to be good citizens if laws were diseases and charges were something that you could catch?
Most of the students' comments indicate that the school was there to give them charges.
I think I stumbled onto something.
Maybe the day was not a total loss.

If the teacher takes the time and risks their power and understanding, sometimes there can be a revelation from a student. The information can be profound and disturbing, but as Freire said " ..you can touch their memory and remake the road" (Freire & Horton, p. 173). You have to be open to hearing almost anything, because you may hear things that explain the behavior in question. The below journal post was just the tip of our understanding with this student, it got more involved, but as we found out more our respect for her grew, the fact that she had lived to be functional at all was amazing. Society had built a cell for her that she was having a hard time freeing herself from.

10-26 FJ
I found out some other interesting information that Stacy-her mother was addicted to crack and died, rumor has it that she found her mother when she was little. She now stays with her aunt, who is rumored to be mean as hell.
Many times when she comes to school she is mad about something her aunt does and the school just escalates this because we have no vehicle for therapy.
We do have a social worker, but many students do not trust them due to previous dealings with them.

Once we found out this and some more information we were able to create some strategies that helped her cope, but we did not do enough to free her. She remained a prisoner to her past.

Another occurrence that seemed strange to me was that some of the students that were supposedly in gangs seemed to be more attracted to their power as a commodity and not true gang affiliation. I feel from going through the experience last year that much of gang activity is taking the place of power society should give the individual. The students that relate to gangs at this school are the most economically disadvantaged. They seemed to be attracted to the power because society gave them no power. Instead they seem to be held powerless, until they perceive themselves as a gang member and then they garnish the power from their connection.

> *11-6 FJ*
> *One of my girls, Stella is prone to violence. I would have never guessed it, she is so nice to me. But she is constantly in trouble in school and out because of beating people up. Stella has a good mom, no dad in the home, a brother who has been in jail, but is out now. She relates herself as a blood. Like I mentioned in a previous journal, there is much more gang activity than the last time I was here. I am not sure why. I asked Stella why she was in a gang, and she said because her brother was and so was her grandmother, who was (from the stories she told me) quite a character. Sella could not really articulate to me why she was in a gang, I am not sure how active she was,,,I am thinking that she was not very active, not like her brother..she seemed to be more attracted to the myth of gangs and the power then the idea of protection like many youths in gang literature. It was strange to me to talk to her because she did not fit the mold. She had a stable parent, a good home, but still identified with it. It was almost as she perceived the gang as a commodity. She wore the gang symbols and was told by a Juvenile judge that she could not wear red at school. She always tried to wear some kind of red.*

Stella had been given more opportunity then most kids who are gang members, she had a involved parent. It seems after I thought about it for a while, that due to the commodification in our society, Stella was merely buying gang affiliation with what she

wore, as if purchasing power. I allude to this in the next post. Consumerism can

influence even gang issues.

> *11-6 FJ*
> *We had many talks but she was very negative about her outlook. She said once a*
> *blood always a blood. I just wonder if there was something more fashionable in*
> *poverty then the gang status, where she would be.*
> *Question: can gang affiliation be a fashion statement, or commodity?*

Freire said that you have to meet the student where they are, not necessarily stay

there, but meet them there and try to move forward. This is extremely hard to do in some

cases. The oppressed student consistently goes back to what they know, and moving

them forward takes a great deal of work. The following post I try to work with formal

language, to get the student to "code shift". Not because this is fair, I explain that the

language you speak at home is fine, but when you work you will have to learn how to

communicate in Standard English. This of course is the gaze of the oppressor,

standardization, but I want the students to at least have the skills to get a job. It is very

difficult to ride the fence on this issue. The post below describes my concern.

> *12-7 FJ*
> *I am convinced by what happened today that the student's environment has the*
> *more to do with their learning than any other factor, including IQ. Most of my*
> *students all have home difficulties. They either are extremely poor or have*
> *parental problems.*
> *When kids are in-trouble and I go talk to them, I basically talk to their*
> *environments for the first 20 minutes. They have to get through that before I can*
> *talk to them but even then the filter of their environment is always present.*
> *Being a drug dealer is considered what they "can" do to earn a living. Getting a*
> *real job, is much more difficult.*
> *This fact smacks me in the face, or just the metaphor of it is always there. It is a*
> *fatalistic structure that holds them down. If you don't have a car, the jobs you*
> *can walk to are low paying, your wardrobe is not acceptable, or the language you*

speak at home, your ability to problem solve, any of these factors continue to talk to me, when we are discussing any problem.

I was talking to a student about getting in trouble, and for example, the student kept talking about the other student he had problems with not "respecting" him. As I was talking to him, he kept talking about continuously talking about respect, but the definition seemed to be scued, not the correct definition of respect. Anything that could be considered criticism, was not respectful to him. It was a very limited definition of respect. It was a learned definition of respect that was not the full definition, and in some cases, not even really talking about respect. It seems that over and over my conversations dealing with students deal with distorted definitions of respect or other dynamics. Like the idea of money or having a "named" brand stuff. Their definition of the good life has been totally influenced by the media. Also it seems the perception of themselves and what they are able to do with their lives.

One student didn't seem to believe that they could ever do anything better then what they could be within a small parameter or choices. They almost seem to relate to is what is in close proximity of their homes (mainly a projects, type environment) or what is pump to them from the media.

As I thought about the conversation with this student in the morning, as I compared it to many talks I had with my college students when I taught at UNCG, was so different. I don't think it had so much to do with maturity, then with the idea that they were almost supposed to have a good life. That they were supposed to get the best opportunities. The kids at this school don't seemed to think that the only thing that they were "supposed" to be was a drug dealer, or working fast food or not to have a good job. The difference was subtle but it definitely existed, they deserved the chance to have a good life, like it was waiting for them, the kids at this school seemed to think that it was not waiting for them, like it was a mystery.

This is a very interesting topic, I think I have stumbled on to something interesting.

In addition to the problem of needing a double language if you talk slang, there are many ideas that are disseminated through the media that hold the kids down. The questionable role models that are available to them by the establishment are not the same role models that seem to be available to the white kids. If you can't play basketball or football or rap, then you are relegated to the ghetto. In a democracy there should be a wide assortment of role models visible to all regardless of background. Where are all the role models? The

students as mentioned in the post above don't seem to feel that they deserve a fair chance.

The modeling from the media is so profound it is all that they know. The post would

indicate that the social imagery is being controlled and the school is somewhat powerless

to affect it.

In the following post I seem to be dealing again with this same hegemonic model

that takes away the hope or demand for a better life. I constantly battled this stereotype

with anything I could think of, but even in my mind, I was at time affected by these

images.

12-11 FJ
There seems to be a disconnect between the way the students feel about
themselves and what they think society is for. I was speaking to my class about
what work was about, and what holidays were about. They seem to think that
society is not for them. Most of them refer to it like "as the man" like it was out
to get them.
I asked john, he said that he was never going to be able to get a good job because
he just wouldn't. They are made for the "good" kids. He would just get the
leftovers. I asked him, why he didn't believe that if he worked hard he would get
a good job. He says his parents have worked hard all their lives and are barely
scraping by. He said "I probably won't get a good job, and even if I do what will
I have when I am old, lots of working, not much more. Like his parents can buy
what they want but they are not happy.
I told asked him, you don't believe that you will get a fair run, he said absolutely
not because he just wouldn't.
Another student chimed in and said what we need we will steal and take, because
that is the only way we can get it. He also said for me not to blame it on rap
music, it was just the way it was. I asked this student about school, you don't
think that we can help you do better in life, he said no.
Across the room came another answer, the student said he would have to be slick
and take what he could, just take it because you will never get a chance to earn it.
The final comment came from teddy, he said he didn't plan on living very long, so
he was going to party till that happened and worry about it on the other side.
The bell rang---before I could get into a better conversation. The thoughts left me
melancholy; they didn't believe in our society, that it was good. They did not feel
entitled to fair treatment, or the American dream, they would have to take to get,
or die trying (there is a rap song about that). They don't even believe in an

abbreviated American dream, they didn't believe anything…it made me sad. We don't seem to have a universal dream.
I thought about all the fraud that they are seeing as examples from the TV on wall street, I wonder if the TV has anything to do with it…I am sure their poverty does.

In the post you can see, where I see, how they have been compressed into a space from where they feel is no escape. The students are fatalistic and have no hope. All my positive energy could not change this conversation, no matter what I said. The problem for me was I could see how wonderful that they could be, I just could not reach through the hegemonic fog that imprisoned them. I failed that day.

The whole semester seemed to be shrouded in pessimism. I could not locate where it was coming from, but we were being held by it. I included this post in this section because I think this pessimism is a distinct feature of domination. If one has no hope, one will not fight for a better life. Also if one's stress is directed at one's peers and not the oppressor then there is no hope of freedom.

11-9 FJ
There is a distinct level of tension in the school and has been since the semester started. I am not sure where it is coming from but the students feel it as well as the teachers. Everyone is looking over each other's shoulders. It is sad because the school used to be so casual and the students felt this casual nature. I don't know if I perceive it because I have been exposed to critical theory or whether I would have seen it last time I worked here. It is interesting because it propagates itself. The more tense everyone becomes the worse the situation becomes. If people would deal with each other in a friendlier respectful manor then a lot of the problems that I am seeing would not show up.

The posts in this section have illustrated the hold the media and the "normal" schools have on the social imaginary. Ordinary and critical teachers have neither time nor the tools (mentioned in a later section) to combat their power.

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<u>An Activist Bent</u>

This section describes my attempts and the students to push back against the dominating forces. In some cases I am creating small bits of subversion to break down the control. It is superficial at best, but it was an attempt to create just a bit of freedom.

> *10-7 AJ*
> *Today I had an interesting occurrence in my classroom one of my students thought that there was to be a search and pulled out her cell phone and wanted me to take it so she wouldn't get confiscated or instead she hid it in a spot in the room I didn't say anything to administration I'm trying to develop a bond of trust with the student and therefore didn't think the cell phone was that important so I am breaking the rules of the school to create a bond with the student can the power relations in school and my tight rope that I walk so far as educating the student versus following the rules of that administration who I really.. really appreciate and like but some of the rules so far as they deal with me are not beneficial to the student nor the teacher so I don't know whether I'm not sure exactly I feel about this I feel like maybe I should have taken the cell phone from the student but if I had it would disrupt my class for long period of time what does that mean in general was a student be disrespectful but showing me the cell phone or was she just mainly doing it in front of me because she trusted me and if she does trust me.. would it betray that trust from her by taking the cell phone from her or telling the administration that she had a cell phone not sure what I feel about this issue I kind of feel in the middle maybe I should have taken the cell phone and just had her get angry for a little while and gotten over it or what I'm not sure about this issue.*

In the above post one can also see the tension that just doing this small thing creates in the mind of the teacher. It is very difficult to hold the guilt and tension that subversive acts require, especially from people who are so used to following all the rules. I believe that most teachers fall into that category.

When a place opens up for the possibility of liberation, the critical teacher must attempt to seize the opportunity because it may not come around again. The post below

indicates the feeling that I experienced when I thought a student was beginning to open

up.

> *10-13 FJ*
> *On a lighter note I have a student who I think can be reached. She has some*
> *problems but I think that we can work through them. She already has some plans*
> *for her life instead of the basic, I don't know.*
> *She walked in the class and informed me that she was a stud, which is the "man"*
> *in a lesbian relationship. She is seventeen and was sent there because she beat up*
> *another girl student so bad as to make the girl pee on herself in the cafeteria, she*
> *was considered a dangerous person.*
> *As I chatted with this girl there was a wonderful spark in her eyes, a hopeful look.*
> *She also seemed to ask the important questions when there was a discussion*
> *going on.*
> *I am very pleased to have her in class.*

I am always looking for what I call the "spark". It indicates to me that the student could

be ready to begin to share their experiences, to have a dialogue. The spark seems to be a

precursor to whom Maxine Greene calls "wide-awakedness". Without it the student is

stuck in the vision of what society says they are (society's "holding cell"- corrupted

social imaginary) and not who they could be, with some reflective discovery. I look for

this "spark" in every students face.

Another strange occurrence that is happening is that YouTube is blocked in the

county. I pushed and pushed to get it unblocked. The tech people are supposedly

working on it. It would make critical inquiry much easier. As a critical teacher you have

to push for these devices that stimulate free thought. It was not surprising now that I look

back that it is blocked. Content control is a tool of the oppressor.

10-13 AJ
You-tube is blocked for some reason- have to check on that. It will be so much easier to teach critical thought with it unblocked at least for me, the teacher.

I was constantly going in and talking to the Principal about the issues I thought were causing the students and teachers difficulty. She always understood, even if she did not agree with me. She even changed some of her policies, but there still was a punitive bent in the attitude no matter how I bridged it with her. I don't think she understood the essence of critical theory, or the democratic schools. I tried many times to explain the things to her. I consider this one of my failures that I was not able to help this great educator to see what was happening. But I didn't stop trying – one must understand, as Freire did, that we are never finished. The next several posts describe a few of my many talks with the Principal.

10-21FJ
So I decided to go in and talk to the principal about how the students were being treated. I went into her office and read the poem I wrote the school, when I left, she cut me off and said that she knew how I felt about the kids but that we were not and did not have the money to be therapeutic. The best we could hope would be for the students to develop good habits from following our rules so that they could go back to regular school.
I said what about when we started and how we thought about the kids and that they needed a better hand in life…and how we were going to try to help them.
She said we are helping them by making them follow the rules and act like normal students. I told her that I felt we were making it worse by taking away more and more of their freedom, she indicated that she felt they had too much freedom.
I told her that this was not how we started and she said she knew that but it was the best we could do with the money we had…indicating that we did not have enough money to give the therapy that the students really needed. I agreed but that we had to do something..
She said that the greatest thing I could work on would be a conflict resolution plan for the county and school one that would be fair to the students. I told her I would look into it..but that I was not giving up. She said that she did not expect me too.

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Much of my direct resistance came in my subtle disregard and protest of the dress code. I did not openly say it was ok not to follow it, but I tried to be lenient about how I enforced it. It was one of the most profound disturbances of personal power that I saw. The dress code was one problem. How it was enforced was the biggest problem. One can argue the logic of having a dress code, but how you enforce it can be devastating to the students involved, especially if they already suffer from esteem issues. The school's enforcement of the dress code was horrible and sometimes leads to extremely punitive measures for the students. But the interesting thing was that the students still broke the code. It was like their ultimate protest.

11-4 FJ
A student (Reggie) came into my room upset because he had lost a great deal of points because of the way his pants were sagging. He said that his shirt was tucked in and that his pants were not sagging that much. I looked at him and smiled and said did you have the hump of your butt showing (this is the current measure of the dress code for butt coverage), he said he was not sure but that all this stuff was bullshit. Now I didn't disagree with him, but knowing this students personality, he seemed to consistently push the limits of the code to create some disturbance. I asked him about it and he said that it was bullshit and he wasn't

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going to do it. I said but you just have to follow the code and you won't get in trouble. He said Mr. G sometimes you got to stand up for what you think. I agreed and we had a good laugh. Thank god this is not an EOC class.
There seems to be an undercurrent of anxiety in the school. I am not sure if it is coming from the overt enforcement of the dress code or what. It seems that makes it worse. The students seem to purposely not follow the code just to antagonize the administration. This makes my job worse because each time one of these disturbances happens it takes a great deal of time to get the class back on task. Of course their grade on the EOC has become my responsibility with No Child Left Behind, and the test seems to test memory knowledge so all these interruptions just cause me to look worse and worse when the students do not understand the knowledge. History is a great tool for critical studies, but with all the facts the students have to learn it is very difficult to even scratch the surface into some critical discussions. I have mixed feelings about the resistance because I want them to stand up for themselves but also I want to get through this history. It is a conflicting situation.

In the above post my tension is evident, about how I deal with the disturbances in my class. Some days it would make me think that there was hope, other days it would irritate me that it took up my instructional time. I bounced back and forth, but I never thought that the way we enforced it was good for the students. I am still trying to figure out why it was such a big deal to the administration but I feel it was because control was their job. Also, I think it was because it was such a site of resistance.

Another example, as mentioned earlier of students providing their own resistance which is why I thought that these behaviors were so valuable to the understanding of democratic structure. In the post below the student explains his rationale for bringing an ipod to school, why he was upset when it was taken. The argument was very rational and would have changed the rule in a democratic school.

11-2 FJ
When the students came into my room they were all upset. There was a search and the students got their hidden ipods taken away. The students are not allowed

to have any electronics or food and are searched randomly. A few have gotten their ipods taken. When this happens instruction freezes and everything focuses on how horrible the school is for taking their property. Some students have almost a 2 hour bus ride. Therefore they like to have their ipods so that they can sleep and the noise of the bus does not disturb them. The reason they do not allow them was because some of them were stolen, so they made a blanket rule that they could not be brought to school.

There are many interruptions in the learning process that have nothing to do with learning. When these happen it is so difficult to get the students even close to being back on task.

When Bob came in and his ipod had been taken, the class was commiserating with him and was chaos for a few minutes. I was able to get the class back into an activity and sat down to talk with Bob. He said that he had worked for his aunt and his dad for weeks to get the money and he had picked the best ipod and now his dad would have to come out here and get it. They lived all the way across the county and it would take weeks. I asked him why he would take the chance. He asked me if I had ever ridden a school bus for an hour or so, especially our beat up buses. I said no, he said that it was the only reason, plus he felt that when he was listening to his ipod he was less likely to get into trouble.

I included the next post because it shows that I was also willing to take some risks to help the students move forward in their understandings of themselves and society. As mentioned before, risk is inherent in any critical pedagogy, especially if you are working in a state run/ sponsored school. The autobiographies were critical activities; this one became pornographic. I still am not sure what to do with it, but she respected the fact that I would let her continue to write it. I only could read a portion of it. Not long after this, I stopped the assignment. I could not take the internal pressure of knowing that it could become front page news. The pressure was so great that I was literally dreaming about how horrible it would be if it became news. I feel that every teacher deals with this kind of pressure if you are resisting the standard curriculum and rule systems. Any kind of resistance can be seen as insubordination and could be the end of your job. It is natural to feel this pressure if you teach critically, I think that it is inevitable.

My discomfort can still be felt from this post. Fighting for democratic space is not a comfortable position.

In my experience, music is the safety blanket of students from poverty. It keeps them from hearing things they don't want to hear, it provides a vehicle for their fantasy, but most of all it seems to be comforting to them. We were not allowed to play music at school, I am not sure why, but it was against the rules. I feel that music can be a platform for knowledge acquisition, also. I am very fond of jazz in the classroom and used it many times to calm students in the past when I taught at the school previously. I decided before Christmas break that I would play some music to see if it would make a difference. The Principal would have been upset, but after doing it for a few days, there were some profound effects.

12-14 FJ
I thought this week I would try something different. It is against the rules, but it is so close to Christmas vacation, that I may be able to get away with it. I have not tried it this year because the principal is so against it. I decided that when my students were doing a worksheet, I would play music. I took a vote in class and they decided overwhelmingly that they wanted some music. I would play jazz and some of the CD's that I had confiscated from them, even the one's with bad language. So I told them if we get all the notes out of the way and they were quiet that I would play some music.
They got all excited, they said they knew that it was against the rules, but they would keep it on the "downlow". So we got done and I played some music.

It was as if a change came over the room, they worked very hard on their assignment that I had given them. The reaction was the same for all my classes. I do not quite understand the hook that music has, I guess it had a great hook on me when I was young.

The concentration level they displayed today was so different then their normal selves. It was amazing how much just a little music had. I asked them if it was easier for them to concentrate with music. They said mr. G we have music playing or noise in the background the whole time they are away from school. This was the only place where there was silence and it made them uncomfortable and they felt like they thought better with music playing. The whole class agreed that the school needed to let them spend at least the last 20 min. playing music when they were working so they would feel more comfortable.

I said echoing the principal that it disturbs some people, keeps them from learning, they answered only old people. They asked me if I was disturbed by it and I said I never really thought about it. They said that I was supposed to know this shit, I was going to be a doctor. They always said that when they had an insight that I had missed..lol.

I thought that just allowing some music would probably get the students to work 20% harder. It is amazing how much more work and how much better they acted, also.

The interesting thing was that the asst. prin. Came to the door the person closest to the speakers was paying attention and turned the music completely down when he walked in, he didn't even notice and told me what he wanted then left the room. They were beaming with the fact that we were going against the rules and how cool it was…they told me when they left, almost every student how they liked the music and would not tell a soul.

I didn't do it with every class to see if they would tell their friends or the administration, but I did not hear a word the rest of the day. It will be interesting if it gets around the next few days. I think we will vote on it tomorrow and see if they want to do it again.

I asked them what about the music that they liked, they said it felt normal.

The fact that I was playing music before break was never told to anyone. The students kept it a secret. I was very glad because I did not want to have any chats over how I was not a team player, or not on board, for breaking the rules. Sometimes just the least little thing middle class people take for granted, students will truly enjoy and derive a benefit from. The risk associated with this act was far less than with the erotic autobiography and easier to stomach. I guess the risk and feelings of tension depend on exactly what

resistance you are attempting. I can't imagine how Paulo Freire felt when he was facing

prison, just because he was trying to get people to think as people and not as objects. It

must have been horrifying. His life could have been on the line. The democratic schools

in the literature embraced the arts and music, it is interesting that they seem to go

together.

Many times the resistance was the spur of the moment decision that I fretted over

later. The fact that the post below was two days before Winter Break made it easier to

accept. As I reflected on this post I thought about how some decisions for resistance

come from the mindset of the resistor because they happen in a split second. I made the

decision instantly, the decision to resist almost as a reflex. I think that as people become

more adept at resistance it becomes more natural. That is the main reason I think public

resistance should be taught and practiced to create it as a reflex action. The democratic

process demands resistance, it empowers the citizen. It is the focal action of discourse. It

is difficult.

> *12-6 FJ*
> *Right about that time, someone in the room heard the "wand" the metal detector wand that they used to search the students. The staff was going from room to room doing a search again. They cut the music down without me having to do anything. They one of them stuck their cell phone in the book case. I laughed knowing that I would have to turn it in.*
> *As they were being searched I decided not to turn it in …we had had such a good morning and we already had the music as a secret…I was really pushing it..but what the hell it is only 2 days before Christmas break.*
> *The kid was very appreciative, because they would have been without the phone all break and that would have been very hard. One of the only joys they have is communication with each other.*
> *I felt very conflicted about this decision, not sure why. I have done something similar before, accept I was not sure that it was a phone or an ipod- I think the other one on hindsite was a phone and not an ipod.*

It is so funny that most of my time is spent dealing with things that have very little to do with teaching or instruction. Comparing the college time in the classroom and here is so different, my concentration was what I was trying to get across, not whether someone had candy, or a phone. What a distraction from teaching all this other stuff.
Time to stop writing I am getting pissed, what a waste of my time.

Again in the above post my tensions are apparent. It irritates me that I have to waste so much time on these activities that are part of the hidden curriculum, the oppressive structure. As I re-read the posts after several other readings it still bothers me, that I am supposed to be teaching US History and I have to watch for searches and student electronic contraband. By just typing that sentence I realize that I am teaching US History, which has always been a struggle, with resistance being one of the factors of change and compromise. Wow, this makes me feel better; I am teaching US History by example. I wish I had thought of it like that before, so I could comment on it, to point it out to the class. Maybe, they understood it at a different level, because they knew I was a good citizen, but I let the cell phone go undisciplined because I didn't want the student to be without it during winter break. I was modeling a good citizen, one that looked after his neighbor. Now I feel better about the incident.

The occurrences listed in the above section are just small activist moments. Many of them would have been suited to teaching democracy if I had thought of them in this manner. If the schools had the ability to teach these kinds of activists' stances, such as civil disobedience, the democratic structure in this country would be very strong.

<u>The Punitive Structure</u>

The school has developed a structure in my 3 year absence that focuses on punitive measures to maintain discipline. I have never agreed with most punitive measures because they only seem to be effective for a short period of time. There is evidence that at certain moral stages, behaviorist functions such as negative rewards do not have a long term behavioral effect on students that have developed a higher moral function. Thus it is not a benefit to use only behavioral methods when therapy may be warranted. I have advocated many times that the school needs a full time psychologist to help the students through many of the external factors that they bring to school with them which affect their behavior. But I have been reminded that the school system simply cannot afford to hire a psychologist at this time. It is interesting that starving the school for capital creates the justification for punitive control.

The following post describes how, even if I am trying to be as understanding as possible, the punitive structure can take over and I cannot intervene in time to stop it from affecting a student. The fact that we hide within these structures and they are not near as malleable as they should be indicates that critical thought is needed to address them. If we are actually trying to help them and we charge them with a crime, that is subjective, disorderly conduct, how is this helping the student adopt new democratic or social understandings? I do not believe that it does and in most cases does the opposite.

> *11-2 AJ*
> *still at odds with the fact that one of my students was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for not obeying a directive from me granted a student had been not been obeying directives in the past but the student is non-confrontational merely resistant and being arrested I just don't feel like an arrest except in the*

very dire of instances should be used to discipline students their involvement in the juvenile justice system I never feel is positive may be in brief instances could be considered positive but in most of my experience it becomes a negative function of society and not some kind of rehabilitative function also I am thinking that maybe we did not do interventions in a timely enough manner to cause such behaviors from not happening and because of that we did not do this I have this underlying guilt that maybe this should be change something should be done about it while I don't know if I can do anything about this particular child but I'm pretty sure that she did not learn anything from it and certainly the students at her school did not learn anything from the experience.

The punitive structure seemed to focus on non-instructional occurrences. It was totally to enforce the Hidden Curriculum. The next post describes a student that I had been working with that showed immense promise. This incident began his downfall and eventually him dropping out of school. He could have easily graduated. I protested the use of ID's in our school many times because I knew that this would be the result.

10-26 AJ
One of my psychology students came in 4th period. Dev he was angry because he said that they got him in trouble, because of the way he was wearing his ID badge.
The id badges were issued and just like I predicted they have caused a great deal of trouble. The kids do not like them and they always are messing with them. Plus the administration is in the halls, making students show them their ID's and when the students give them attitude, because that is what our students do, it is what I may do if confronted with something new like and ID. Being labeled, and tagged like cattle. We have been told that these ID badges are necessary for security. But so far they seem just to be there to get kids in trouble.

The idea that the badges were for security is a joke. We have 100 students at the most -- if you don't know your students you shouldn't be teaching. Here is my initial reaction about the ID badges. The rationale is faulty because they were not adopted by all the schools.

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10-7 FJ

Got an email this afternoon that the students were going to be wearing ID badges. Mind you there are only 100 students here when we are as full as we get. I fired an email back asking the purpose of this, and that this was just another non-instructional hurdle these kids were asked to endure when they could not even function in a regular setting much less with all these extra rules. I was told that the kids could do it and that I was not being a team player. It was mentioned that schools were going to ID's and the kids would have to get used to them anyway, because that is the way it will be when they get back to normal school, may as well get used to it now.

The student IDs were a huge stumbling block all year. Their only apparent purpose was to get kids in trouble so they would have to deal with the administration. My critical stance on the IDs never changed. I mention in a later post how I discussed them with the Principal many times. It just made the students feel like they were being tagged and owned. Sometimes no matter what you do, the situation never changes. We have a new Principal this year. I told her about the concerns with the IDs and she said she didn't care and would put it to a vote. The day the staff voted I was out for a meeting, the staff voted to have the IDs after they complained about them all last year. It is interesting how oppression perpetuates itself, internalizing and justifying.

The other non-instructional rule that was enforced to the letter was the dress code mentioned in earlier posts. The dress code did not exist when I was first employed at the school, but was implemented in my absence. I tried many times to protest and apply pressure to get the dress code rescinded, but to no avail. The following post illustrates one attempt. The fact that critical pedagogy must consistently in the face of failure attempt to make its point is extremely exhausting and frustrating. Many times, the Assistant Principal used threats of a charge to get the students to follow the rules. I

thought about how discipline power is maintained through the use of the body, the body

is threatened with enclosure to create obedience, as mentioned by Foucault (Dreyfus &

Rabinow, 1983). It is a perfect example of a characteristic of domination.

The next post again shows my frustration and fatigue at having to deal with such a

trivial issue. This issue got many students in trouble to include getting some of them

charged with disorderly conduct from the arguments created by it. The hostility that we

were trying to correct we made worse and then disciplined the student for it. We were

creating our own crimes and then enforcing them on others.

> *10-7 FJ*
> *The school is not running as smoothly as I remember, the students seem much*
> *more hostile. I think it is the way the rules are being enforced. I keep hearing*
> *that a student could be charged with disorderly conduct or will be charged with*
> *disorderly conduct for not following the rules. A lot of these rules have to do with*
> *the dress code. The students have to wear a collared shirt tucked in with a belt.*
> *If not they will have to change if they refuse, they will get in-trouble.*
> *A student was in the hall today, had a belt on but did not have his pants pulled up*
> *far enough. The teachers started on him and the assistant principal got involved.*
> *It became a test of wills over something that was not education related. The*
> *student was disrespectful to the principal and then it escalated till the student was*
> *threatened with getting a charge. As I was standing in the hall, I went walked*
> *down to see if I could help and was told that it was taken care of.*
> *The student did not get charged but he was suspended for a day.*
> *I made a mental note to discuss this with the principal in the next few days.*
> *Also- it seems that there is an attitude prevailing in the teachers that it is us*
> *against the students. This type of thinking did not exist last time I taught here...I*
> *am wondering where this came from..?*
> *It irritates me that there is so much attention given to non instructional events.*

Another journal entry transcribed below, that is illustrative of the hostility that is

reflected from the students but created by the staff. The staff member is just following

the strict dress code policy but it becomes a complete block to student learning for the

rest of the day and actually many times could have become a dangerous situation on many different fronts. But all caused by this one rule, that was initiated by a staff that was supposed to be "helping" the students get back on a "normal" track. Why are they expected to be "normal", what a waste?

> *11-9 FJ*
> *A student was walking down the hall, a teacher stopped him about the dress code. His shirt was un-tucked. It became a power struggle and turned ugly in the hall, both the teacher and the student were yelling at each other. It was so silly over the fact that his shirt was not tucked in.*
> *A student came into my class a teacher right behind him to take points off of his point sheet. It was a heated discussion with the teacher taking a great deal of his points and then leaving. It left my classroom in a shambles because of the common lack of respect of the teacher to student and vice versa. I never did get the room completely on task after that, because of that teachers conduct.*
> *I think it has to do with the teachers feeling like they need to catch the students doing something wrong. It is like they feel like if the students somehow get away with something then they are not learning their lesson. It is like they are making the experience punitive instead of educative.*
> *It is funny when we first took the school over it was punitive and that was a huge problem and we changed it to educational, and now it has turned back punitive..very strange. I need to figure that out for myself.*

As the above journal mentions, a punitive structure existed in the school before my first employment and it was completely scrapped because education goals were not being met by the students. Since my departure it has slowly crept back into the thought process of the staff. I wonder if it stems just from the daily contact with students that have so many emotional problems and the fact that the staff are teachers and not psychologists who are trained to deal with such difficulties. It could be said that many teachers end up trying to help students with problems that affect their education but are not of their education.

I forced this issue so much that eventually it changed and the staff did not use the charge as much, or the threat. It was a small victory but I feel that the school is better for it. Many times in functioning critical work the victories are very small and seem insignificant, but in fact, as they build up they can create change. At least that is what I am hoping.

> *10-9 FJ*
> *It has been a tiring week. I had a talk with the principal today about the dress code. She said it was a security issue. That it was there to protect the teachers. It would help them see weapons and such on the students. I was told that this was a serious matter and I should be on board with it. I told her that we did not need it before and at one time even let the students wear hats. They don't seem to be learning more with collared shirts on and belts. She said that the disciple had improved and I mentioned that I didn't think so as a matter a fact there seemed to be more tension now than before. She seemed irritated that I was mentioning it, that was strange because before I could speak my mind whenever I wanted to...things had changed around here. She said that she was even ordering hole punchers to punch the students point sheets when the students did not have their pants pulled up or their shirts tucked in correctly. She also said that I needed to be on bored with this even if I had trouble with the rule.*
> *On a positive note she did say that she would talk to the asst. principal about threatening to use disorderly conduct charges.*

I was still chastised a bit, but it was worth it to help to make this change. The chance of having a run in with administration is great when you teach critically. It seems to be the only way to create change.

I also talked with the staff about this the dress code problems but they did not seem to have a clue. Sometimes I as mentioned in the post below I would just note what they had said then think about it later. If I thought that the moment would not be productive I would not begin a discussion. I felt that I needed to be positive about how I approached these issues. This was very difficult because in many cases I wanted to

smack, or yell at the staff. But in their defense they have not been exposed to the critical

literature and many have not felt discrimination before. They have not had the need to

address these issues. I bit my tongue, but many times I was able to confront the issues. It

did not seem to help, but I envisioned that I was just chipping away at a huge stone wall

and if I was consistent a crack would allow some critical thought to break through. Why

do people not want to value lives different from their own? It is very difficult to bring up

diversity, it seems to be perceived as weakness instead of strength.

> *10-13 FJ*
> *talked to a teacher casually about how they felt about the dress code most said*
> *they liked it and the students would have to learn how to dress. I thought this was*
> *strange in that they spent class instruction time on it, they said that it was a*
> *necessary evil if the kids were going to be ready got make it in the real world.*
> *That they would have to learn to tuck in their shirt and dress "right". I smiled*
> *and said what if they are a mechanic, and the teacher said well they have to look*
> *professional. I stated that in general I did not care how my mechanic dressed as*
> *long as he can work on my car, she said that I was always looking for an excuse*
> *for these students. I smiled and said don't you think they deserve one, most of*
> *what has happened has been about their parents not about them. She rolled her*
> *eyes and walked away, I held my tongue..lol.*

The above post points emphatically to the dominant culture and its hold on the social

imaginary that is mentioned in Chapter 1, with the students being the objects that needed

to be molded to learn to "dress right".

The teachers also enforced the rule and then escalated the student's behavior

instead of trying to calm the student down. I try to remember that they are just kids and

many times when they are mad, like the rest, say things they do not mean. But the staff

seems to be insulted and escalates the situation instead of diffusing it. Then they seem to

enjoy the oppression. The journal below illustrates this occurrence. Why do we relish

dominance?

> *10-19 FJ*
> *It seemed like this happened several times today and on previous days that the kids would be upset and instead of the teachers and staff calming them down they made it worse by antagonizing them. Saying if you don't calm down you will get in trouble, or look me in the face when I am talking to you…all these things escalated the kids behavior. A kid even got sprayed today with pepper spray for not calming down. Interesting therapeutic measure. I was appalled, many of the teachers were just laughing about it. Many of the other teachers indicate that we are doing these kids a service by being tough on them…ie like a boot camp. That seems to be the rationale when I said something to them when they were laughing about the pepper spray.*

As a critical teacher I would try to go talk to a student after they had calmed

down. Many times I would engage them in a discourse to try to help them understand

both sides, especially the fact that these teachers were not "bad", just mistaken in their

actions. I truly believe that these are some of the greatest teachers and the most

forgiving, but oppression can have an entertainment factor. (I am not sure whether it

comes from the stimulation that you are dominating or just being nervous about the fact

that it is not aimed at you). In the journal post below I go and try to communicate with a

student as mentioned above.

> *10-30 FJ*
> *I went and talked to him in the detention area and he of course was mad. I saw myself what happened so I understood exactly what he was talking about. He said how the cop had not liked him for a long time and was always looking for a way to taunt him. I had seen this happen with my own eyes. He said that he was just going to drop out, I advised against this, but is that the wrong thing to do. The cop threatened him with numerous charges. Would it be better for him just to drop out and get a GED, and not get arrested. He also was getting in trouble on the bus, because he kept getting up before the bus stopped.*

They decided to stop having the bus pick him up because he kept getting in trouble- this would drop him out because he would miss many days, his mom could not bring him.
He did get into trouble other than this time, so I can't paint a rosy picture of him, but the ability in him was great I decided to talk to the administration about him and what I saw.

The talk was not helpful -- he eventually dropped out of school. Critical teaching is riddled with failure that one must get used to.

The structure that has been described is not democratic nor is it liberating. It is the essence of domination and it seems to damage the social fabric of the future democratic citizens in our care. These types of structures do not exist in a true democratic setting because they are simply not needed.

A Difficult Time

Many times during the course of the school year I did not know exactly what to do. I felt that I needed to do something that would make a difference, but I was not sure what. These thoughts led to intense feelings of despair and loss of value. My humanity would come rushing back to the surface, my feelings would overwhelm me at times in a very fatalistic fashion. Several times during the year I felt like giving up and finding a new profession. This had never happened to me when I was teaching. It was a new occurrence. Why did it happen at this time? Was it my purposeful focus on critical teaching and democracy? Yes. Because teaching with critical awareness prompted a responsibility that drove me to places I would not usually go. The change in school structure from when I taught there 3 years ago added to my disgust. My vision of this wonderful school had been altered and it was very painful.

11-9 AJ

I am very sad. I feel like the most ineffective teacher ever. My second period class is not learning history, it seems like a futile task to even bother teaching them history. I am not sure that I even want to stay at this school and teach history. I wish they wanted to learn and not that we are always trying to force them to learn. They need to feel like they need this information. Not like we are making them learn this information. I am sure that most of them are not learning anything about history, it is not important to them. I cannot seem to be able to reach them, my processes are not working, I hate that I even have to manage them. They should be managing themselves. They should understand at their stage. They are not free. Their minds are stuck in a process that is not effective. I don't even want to reach them now. I do not care at all about them. I want to leave this place and never come back.

I don't want to think about their futures, I don't want to think about their learning…I just don't care. I have lost my need to reach them. They will never be free. They are slaves into themselves and I don't have the capacity to make a difference in their lives.

What was my best class is now my worst…actually all my classes are not good, not learning, un-liberated no matter what I do. Even with all my knowledge I cannot find the crack, the system, holds me back, I hold myself back. I am ineffective as a teacher, in this place. I want someone who wants to learn. Who is not so rude, and shitty.

I want to teach people who want to hear what I have to say, who want to make a change in their lives, who actually enjoy my company. I don't think that I have what it takes anymore. I have lost my way, in the process. It is a bad day!

The above journal pains me to read. I rarely feel this way and many times if I do the feeling leaves me after a short period of time. Teaching critically is a burden that, if shouldered alone, can disrupt even the basic foundations of one's personality. I felt weak, ineffective and alone in the above post. I took the time to write it right after the class left that I am talking about in the post. It is raw, but in it you can feel the burden, of teaching for liberation.

10-16 FJ
I was concerned when the girls mentioned that if you didn't agree with something, "have your heart in it" as they said you should not do it...this weighs on me...do I have my heart in public school teaching....
I think the teacher got taught..

Viewing these journals in this section helped me to realize that even though the day seems bad, there will be good days in the future if you do what you love. If one's heart is not in it then don't do it, because the rewards in this line of teaching can be small. Freire must have felt terrible in prison all alone, not knowing that his ideas would help change the landscape of education and peoples' lives, but he kept writing and learning. It gives me solace that I am in good company and not alone. One thing I have learned that critical work is much better to do with someone who understands its worth.

Sometimes I wrestled with the idea, who would have to feel bad, was it me or the student. Either I would feel bad later if I did not discipline the student, or the student would feel bad if I did. It was a constant struggle, and many times I chose to make myself feel bad and take the chance that the student would begin to see their error if there was one. As mentioned before, they could even be breaking a rule I thought was silly and I would go through this dance of indecision.

12-17 AJ
I was very angry earlier because I felt that I did not discipline a student like I thought I should. I just let the student get away with what they had done. But dishing out severe discipline would have caused the students day to go down hill. That is interesting, because now I feel bad instead of the student. The student feels fine.
Also the teacher feels like they have been dominated or gotten over on them by the student. I am not sure why it feels like this but it does. So what do I do, make myself feel bad or the student.

The more I delved into critical teaching and the students opened up to me the more difficult the work became. The next few posts are examples of my discord and motivation to resist. All critical work takes intrinsic motivation, mine came from the "spark" in the students eyes. One had to look for it though.

10-19 FJ
What had the school I loved become…I also didn't like the way they were treating Stacy, seemed to be the language of "breaking" her..i do not like this at all.
This bothers me that we don't seem to be looking out for the students. We seem to be an oppressive, most oppressive institution operating on the guise of giving the kids an education.
Looking at this again is very difficult..i need to talk to the principal about this tomorrow or the next day. What good are we if we are not helping.

10-23 FJ
Stacy and the class and I began to discuss the idea that kids come to this school and get in more trouble instead of helping them out. I agreed, we chatted about this for almost a whole period. I was so disgusted that I did not care about the curriculum.

I constantly became disgusted during the whole process. I think much of my discord came from the fact that once I had understood critical pedagogy all these discrepancies were revealed and constantly in my face. The forces of domination were all around and liberation was sparse and difficult. In a democratic school there would never have been any of this type of despair, maybe another, but the students would not have felt so out of control, because they would be controlling their own education and movement.

12-2 FJ
It feels like I haven't done anything for this batch of kids. The way I used to feel seems to have changed. I am constantly second guessing myself, over and over. It seems that because the rules are so strict I feel confined in what I do, or when I get the mood set in the classroom something happens, many time not related to the students, that takes the calmness away which is condusive to understanding. It is like how can we ever get the kids to see how it is through a critical lens if they cannot approach anything calmly and investigative. I spend hours, just unraveling the madness that the ID's cause. Either they are not on in the right place or they have been defaced or fallen off or whatever. It goes on and on, so ridiculous. The moments I used to have with the students when I taught here the first time don't seem to be happening. Is it because after being exposed to a critical lens I don't agree with the mission on public schools as much anymore? Am I really just sorting these kids so society can enslave them. Am I actually part of the machine. All these things disturb me greatly and I don't seem to be able to reach the kids as well. I think that coming back here was bad for my soul. It has taken one of my most precious memories and trashed it.
I don't remember such feelings before. When I think of the joy that used to be in this place, even though it was terribly hard. No joy here now. They could not have changed this much. It has to be me. Is critical pedagogy a curse. I don't think I can reach the kids anymore.
Even the principal who I love dearly, I look at differently. Is this because of critical lens? Am I just constantly critiquing everything. I should have picked another topic for my dissertation. Writing about this stuff is painful, if feel like a failure today, this week, this semester. The joyful times in teaching have gone.

In the above journal entry I equate critical pedagogy as a curse. It feels that way because like a curse it cannot be lifted once the construction has been exposed, then you cannot return to the old way. The vision is clear and unobstructed. There is no shaking the view. The post is very raw but I am speaking from the heart. Critical thought is a burden that simply does not go away. There is a conflict that happens against the old way. It happens at least invisibly in your mind. You interrogate things you took for granted, look at things differently. The conflict works on the old structures in your mind and is tiring.   The conflict manifests itself in the feelings you have for places, things and even the people that you love.

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12-18 FJ
Last day before break, I am so relieved. Almost half of the students have been
suspended, or at least it seems that way. The students are ready and I am ready.
Since I have been back I have been so tired and feel like I have been in so much
conflict with everyone. Even though much of the conflict is in my mind, and not
displayed for the public it still is difficult.
I heard this quote years ago, that you never should lend your energy to something
that you disagreed with, promote something you don't believe in. That is what I
feel that I am doing. Using my pure energy to help sustain something that I have
lost my belief in. I hope that this feeling goes away, it makes me feel guilty, when
so many people need a job right now. I also really love the people that I work for
even though I am not sure if they have the belief that they are helping the
students, maybe they think they are being so strict, I am sure they do. I don't
think that they would do anything that would consciously harm a child.
All this critical knowledge is indeed the greatest burden that I carry. Making my
own burdens pale in comparison. It is exhausting and frustrating...I hope
something will change.
As I watched the students leave, I wondered what kind of holiday some of them
would have, some live in group homes, in total poverty.
It is interesting that they still have such a good sense of humor, even though they
are so sensitive to all other inputs, their humor is stellar.
I hope that have a peaceful holiday. I hope I have a peaceful holiday. The
burden is great to know so much must be done. There never is enough time.

The section seems riddled with despair but as I reflect it provides me with a

record of my resolve. I could have given in to these feelings, instead I forged forward.

The democratic road never ends. It is the road and its scenery that provides our lives with

substance, meaning and freedom. There is a great deal of meaning from the events

described here, events that every democratic scholar has faced, events that show

democracy is painful, always unfinished and never easy.

<u>A Critical Endeavour</u>

During the process of collecting my journals I tried direct systematic strategies for

creating critical thought. These processes varied some turned out to be extremely

productive for the students and I, others were a failure, at that time. The difference from

the other sections in the autobiographical process was that these events were planned

according to the classes that I had and what curriculum I was trying to teach. Much of

what the other sections deal with are critical reactions to events that happened in the

school. This section includes many of the critical events that were attempted within the

state curriculum.

> *10-13FJ*
> *I am taking notes on what things will be interesting to the students that could be codified, that can be taken apart by them in a critical fashion. Advertising will be my first victim, they seem to be totally addicted to consumerism. It is all about the shoes and clothing, even though they are all on free and reduced lunch. I have asked the students to tell me what are some of their favorite ads so we can discuss them in class.*

As Freire indicated it takes time to get to know your students ingenuous

knowledge before you can find or create the codifications that may lead to critical

thought. As indicated I spent my first week just investigating what knowledge I could

draw from their own experiences. I picked advertising because it seems to control their

choices without them knowing. It became apparent that just doing some work on

advertising would be difficult because I had to move through the curriculum at such a

rapid pace. Why do we skim through History like this? It becomes meaningless. Maybe

that is the point.

One of the critical experiments in Psychology we discussed was the Milgram

Experiment.

10-14 FJ

We are moving so fast through the history curriculum in US history that finding time to do some critical work on stuff, like advertising is difficult. In order to get all the standard course of study you have to move so fast that there is not time to pull things out of the curriculum to critique and make inferences to. We have had some luck with nationalism and sectionalism, but the students could care less, they only seem to stay in here because of the stories that I try to either make up or tell from history that I know. They keep asking why are they having to learn this. We have had some critical discussions about native Americans, but they have to be so short, because the amount of material that they have to learn. Teaching critical thinking is difficult if not impossible with the width of the US history curriculum.

-have had a bit better luck with the psychology class. They are not as mature as the US history students. I am trying to do the Milgram experiment with them on Friday. That should be interesting. I have had some talks with them before to prep them for the talks.

These talks have centered on: What would you do to conform? At first we talked about how hard it was to not follow the rules. They corrected me and said that it was not hard at all, it was only if you were caught, that was hard.

I took this opportunity to draw an inference to their school, our school.

-if you look at our school, what do you see

There were answers like, it was a prison, that you had no personal expression, that you could not speak out if you were being treated unfairly.

So once I started this frame of thought I knew that we were finally involved in a real critical discussion. I was elated. So I mentioned to them what was their education for here. They all said at once to make them act right, normal so they could go back to their real schools. So I said, well what are the "real" schools for, they said so that they could go to college and get a good job and be rich.

So I mentioned that being rich may not necessarily be good and they rolled their eyes at me and said that I was rich and I seemed to be doing fine. Right as I was getting ready to go further into the issue the bell rang and they jumped up and went home.

I sat there at my desk pondering these thoughts, when an announcement came on that I needed to go to the office.

I went to take care of the office stuff, some paperwork. I mentioned this to the principal and she agreed that this was just a place to get them on the right track so they could function in "normal" school. I just nodded and went back to my room to write this journal while I could remember.

I feel kind of like, is this all that we are doing "whipping them back into shape" like I heard a teacher say in the teachers' lounge. Is this what I want to do with my time, whip people into shape, suppose I don't like the shape that they take, and more important, suppose the shape we are whipping them into covers up a shape that is wonderful and creative? Suppose what we do extinguishes their spark, that holds their shape?

I left school disturbed and pissed.

In the post above even after the students did well working with the critical project, that leaves me with huge questions. The students completely critiqued the school correctly, there was no construction to unravel they got the picture.

10-16 FJ
Well I showed both my psychology students the Milgram experiment.
The first psychology class was girls and they could not believe that the people went on hurting the other people. We discussed what it looked like to follow orders no matter what. They said that they would not do it even if they got in trouble or messed up the experiment.
I asked them why. One feisty girl, Brenda, said that she would never hurt somebody like that just because someone told her. I interjected, what if you don't like the person being shocked? She said that, that might make it easier, but it still it would not be right.
I asked about following directions for the sake of following directions, they all smiled and said that it was easy to just tell them to fuck off..and walk away.
We discussed how that would be here, that if I just told the school that if they were doing something to a student that I did not agree with that I may loose my job. They agreed and said that I already had done some interventions that could have gotten me introuble if the principal did not like me. I thought about that....
We continued our discussion about what it meant to follow the rules even if it was bad for you. They stated many things but the overall outcome was that if they didn't agree with it they would at least protest and if they actually thought that they were harming someone, then they would not do it, cut and dried.
The boys psychology class, was quite different. They thought the experiment was funny and they said that they would love to shock someone.
They also seemed to indicate, that following the rules was not important unless they felt that it was good for their reputation. They would have shocked the people to death. They laughed a lot during the discussion indicating that there was some nervous energy that they were not dealing with, they did not seem to see their own correlation, that they were not following the rules and they were getting a shock education. I mentioned this and they said that they disserved some of it because they didn't behave.

The students enjoyed this discussion. I got some profound answers and it was interesting to see that the boys were much more prone to being controlled by external

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forces than the girls. I thought this may be due to the compassion issue but was not sure.

As I think about this issue, the staff seems to not have any problems bringing the

"hammer" down on the students, male or female, there does not seem to be a difference

in compassion. I was glad the students liked the talk. The word got around that Mr. G

was talking about all this crazy stuff and that it was cool. It could be worse, so I took that

as a compliment and looked for more interesting things they might do. Critical pedagogy

requires creativity.

I was going to have my class create codifications from their own pictures. I felt

that if they had something invested in the process then they might get more out of it. I

bought the cameras sent them home with the kids, to be told that I shouldn't do that it

could lead to problems. There are many blocks that will appear if critical pedagogy is

attempted.

10-26 FJ
I tried to get them to take cameras home to take pictures of interesting things
around the neighborhood and the administration did not think it was a good idea,
no telling what they would take a picture of…exactly..that was my point. But it
was shot down, I have been getting used to that.
I was going to use their pictures after I had gone through them to create some
codifications that we could interrogate about their lives. I was not able to do this
exercise and will have to work on some other way to make this happen.

I was on the lookout at all times for something to use to stimulate critical thought.

I recorded this journal when I realized that the students loved to color. In the critical

mindset the teacher has to be constantly monitoring his/ her students so you can find or

create codifications that are suited and current. In democracy the mindset is the same.

The democratic schools do this well. Our school on the other hand does not.

10-21 AJ
Before lunch the students wanted to color, very interesting all are in their seats
coloring away. They are 16 or so years old and are totally content just coloring.
Maybe I should create some lessons that have codifications that exist in coloring
format…so the students can color as they learn. That may give them something,
to do as they decode each, picture.
It is something interesting to think about…using coloring pictures to learn
concepts…

I never did act on this entry; I probably should have but forgot about it until I was

reviewing the journals. Thoughts and concepts can slip by you because the days move

so quickly. There never seems to be enough time.

The greatest service to critical thought the schools could do is to unblock

YouTube. It is blocked at the county level as mentioned earlier and I spent most of the

year trying to get it unblocked, at least for the teachers! YouTube has great codifications

already created that can be searched by issue. There is a great deal of trash but especially

for History and current events, it would be so valuable as a source. How do they expect

the students to ever learn to control themselves and decide on content if everything that is

controversial is blocked? Democratic practice is non-existent in the school systems, even

with the websites the students can visit. Everything is controlled.

10-23 FJ
You tube will not be unblocked. Said they couldn't because of the law. Sounds
fishy to me, but because of this controversial issues cannot be discussed in the
classroom.

I decided because it seemed so valuable to the idea of responsibility I would make

up a story about a kid and mention the idea of "catching" a charge. I told the story to the

class and we spent most of a period creating a dialogue about it. It was a good talk and I felt the students gleaned at least a bit out of it. But the bad according to them was not the law, or the charge as with the other class, it was getting caught. I had to work on this to move them away from getting caught to something that had a subject bent. What about the law being wrong?

> *10-26 FJ*
> *I have spend most of the weekend and day pondering the notion of catching a charge. There seems to be a total lack of perceived responsibility on the part of the students to understand the law or rules. I understand how they can come to that conclusion, but it seems strange to me.*
> *I had another talk with my US history class, told a story about the "catching" idea. They could see where I was coming from and they understood my questions and even provided some insight but refused to budge on this idea. That the part that was bad was that they got caught. I guess we all have this notion to some extent because of the way we even deal with speeding tickets. The cop caught us…that was the bad thing. So I guess I can transfer this to other issues.*

Some of the critical insight I tried in the post below was based on a planned one-on-one discussion with a student. The discussion was an attempt to help him understand and locate the power that resides in him. I felt that if I could just get him to see it he would be able to see his life from another perspective. But as Freire said, you have to let them come to it, you cannot force critical thought on anyone. The student seemed to understand, but in practice did not. He eventually dropped out. But maybe at some other time my talk will come back to him or he can relate it to another incident and see himself differently. In the first post I think he has begun to think about himself more critically, the second post reveals I was mistaken.

10-28 FJ
to be there to get kids in trouble.
I have been working with this student for a while. He is so talented. I took him out in the hall last week and explained to him how much power he has...he is a light skinned..half African American and half white. His appearance is one of authority, and calm. He does all the work that I ask him to do and is very respectful.
I told him in the hall that he was a border crosser, that he could help the world with the power he had to live in both worlds, the black and white. He seemed to understand, I also couched it in the form of a special responsibility, he could help if he decided too. I didn't not want him to feel any extra weight, he was already dealing with personal issues. But I did want him to know the special characteristic, that he felt was a burden was actually a benefit.
He understood and his attitude was affected for the rest of the class. Even getting along with the other boys in class.
The bell rung and I felt it had been a good day.

10-30 FJ
I am so angry, dev got in-trouble today with the sheriff, because his badge was not facing the correct way, the cop asked him about it and he smarted off to the cop, which I found out later had a history with him. This has lead to an escalation and he has been in detention all day. I had some interesting things to discuss with them and some articles to read with them, and I definitely wanted him to be in my class because he because of his intelligence he would be able to help the class with this reading project.
I have decided to work on them reading "The Souls of Black Folks" or at least a bit of it by WEB Debois.
It has been very difficult with the class understanding even the first page. This project without two of my anchor students may not be possible. We trudged though it but they did not seem to get it...he would have helped a great deal also. I had a discussion with him about the book and he seemed to understand it a great deal.

I planned on using W. E. B Du Bois work as the next codification hoping that the student

I had the chat with would have been in the class. The Du Bois work would have

connected with our talk. Unfortunately the structure of the school interrupted my critical

work. Critical work is never completely plan-able. The critical pedagogue must be able

to alter his/ her plans to adapt to the current situation. I was very upset that this did not happen the way I planned it.

I worked constantly trying to ascertain what codifications may be influential to the students. I did some more insightful discussions and came to the conclusion that I had to create preliminary codifications, so that the students could react initially and I could find more information from their reaction. This was cumbersome and difficult. I eventually just looked for some on my own.

> *11-2 AJ*
> *So we had discussions and I had some diagrams using stick figures, to explain a few concepts and then as we had conversations I began to see a picture of what might need to be accomplished.*

One thing I thought would be interesting in my search was to have the students write their autobiography. I felt this would realize some of the internal pressure and provide some therapeutic type instruction. The earlier journal posts in this chapter indicated this was not quite the way it worked, due to the pornographic autobiography that disturbed even my most liberal senses. The other students did work on theirs but in all fairness, I decided to let the project end with what they had and give them a grade. I decided from that point that if I had them create the codification I would have to have some control. Is this the way oppression propagates itself? The posts below help show my thinking on this issue. It was not easy.

> *11-16 FJ*
> *After doing some thinking over the weekend on the topic I have decided to try to stimulate reflection be having the students write a small autobiography. I think it*

will help them to see some of their lives on paper so that they may be able to do some reflecting.

The previous journal writing has indicated that the students can't seem to see their lives from a distance nor reflect on past experiences as a learning tool. I think if they can get this ability, then that would be a great leap for the students in liberating their thinking. It may even be able to help release them from their bent toward so much consumerism. They constantly see their lives in terms of the objects that they have, or can get and not who they are. They do not like to do any writing because it is so different from their video type lives. It would be cool to have them do a short video of their lives, like part of their autobiography as video..if possible..i will introduce it tomorrow.

11-18 FJ

I had the students begin their autobiography projects. They seemed very excited about them and we decided to go to the computer lab to type them. When we got in there one of the girls in there did not get along with the one of the girls in my class. I tried to nip this in the bud, but it was not much trouble because they were interested in telling their stories. I found this interesting because they normally do not want to do any work.

They actually typed for the whole period. One of the girls had some trouble starting, saying that nothing ever happens in her life, but I was able to take her to her first memory and she started typing about that.

Once the class was over I popped the zip drive in my computer and they were ok, needed just a bit of work, but one was pornographic. So now I have to decide how do I address it. The principal said it did not matter what they wrote as long as they were getting it out. It scares me, because this county is very conservative and known for not having any type stuff like that. It seems that she was getting stuff out of her head. I will have to think about it.

The project began to cause me mental distress from that moment onward. Each time they worked on it I felt like I was looking over my shoulder. I scrapped the project after they had done some good work. In the above post I am beginning to become paranoid about it. Paranoia must be a feature of doing critical work. Who will find out? What will they do? How will they react? All these questions seem to come rushing to the forefront. Critical work is dangerous to the sane mind.

I found my own codifications on the net at home and downloaded them and showed them to my classes. The response on these was much more predictable and comfortable. I am not sure critical work should be comfortable. The post describes the process and how the students reacted.

11-20 FJ
I did some more codifications with the classes. Used the same pictures for us and the 2 psychologies. With everything blocked at school it is difficult to do any planning there for any critical activity.- more on that later.
The codifications were of people that had been in wars, some were missing limbs some were just very sad sitting next to their bombed out houses. The students were asked to fill out a sheet that had questions on it about the pictures. Questions like: Where is the power in this picture? Is there domination going on? How does this make you feel and why?
I got some surprising answers. One of the students said that the pictures made him feel like he had been there. I exposed them to the fact that one of the pictures they thought were of war, was of a street gang fight. They couldn't believe that it could be in this country. It was a grainy picture, so to give them credit it would have been hard to tell. But it made a nice connection into their own lives, some of them have witnessed drive by shootings and seen people killed. They don't talk about the real stuff, mainly about what the rap artists do.
We had a very good chat. I got nervous when one of the administrators walked down the hall. They didn't say anything but I figured that the pics were a tad bit graphic that I was using for public school. The students are getting better about picking out the power in the picture.

One of the things I thought would be important was to have their bodies in motion to help with the understanding. I did some research and decided to use some work from Grotowski (Wangh, 2000). The students did not get much out of it. They had trouble understanding the process. It was difficult for me to trust them enough to let them experiment with it. Why was it so difficult to trust them? I am not sure, maybe I was afraid of what might happen because of my teaching? As I ponder this journal I think about how I feel about the students. Was what I felt about who they could be,

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superficial? If I did not trust them to do movement how was I going to trust them for

anything else? I think the fact that it was so foreign an exercise to me also made me

uncomfortable.

> *11-30 FJ*
> *I did some movement exercises from Grotowski where you take on emotion and throw it off. I have come to the understanding that the students are confined to much mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. So I think some experimental theatre will be interesting and also give them some practice doing something totally different in school. I can only do this in my psychology classes because these are not tested. We started by doing some stretches on the floor, this went ok, with a great deal of laughing. I tried the exercise that I really wanted to do, which was to have them pass an emotion to one another. That did not work so well. I found it difficult to function thinking that the administration may be looking on the camera. I have been trying all kinds of stuff to try to jog the consumerist control out of their heads..i thought that having their body in motion might help. Either I do not have enough skill to teach it, or I do not give these things enough time, because it turned into so much chaos that I had to have them stop. They did not learn the technique well enough to do it…I would have to teach it one on one.*
> *I don't know if I just don't have enough faith in them, or I am afraid I will get singled out doing something crazy that I try these things for a very short time and then give up. There are many things that I could have let go on longer but I was afraid of what it might turn into or what the other teachers might think if I let it go on too long. Plus there is the thing of having all the kids in their seats. I need to give them more time…but every time I do a different activity and it is not working the way I saw it in my head I shut it down before chaos and maybe even a fight breaks out. That is not what I should be doing but I can't seem to give these experiments, especially the ones that get rowdy enough time.*
> *The administrator came by when we were stretching and said that it did not look like class work. I told her to give me some slack, she said ok, but not to make much noise.*
> *I was in her office later and asked her why she thought there was link between learning and silence and stillness. She told me to get out..lol.*

In another instance I decided to work on a process drama. I had done this

exercise with my college classes several times and it was a success. As I reflect on this

post I realize that I am more comfortable with this exercise because I have done it many

times. It seems that the teacher's confidence in the exercise affects its outcome. I have

never thought about it before. Does critical thought require confidence in the procedure

to help set the stage for the procedures success? It seems so.

> *12-4 FJ*
> *I also decided to do a process drama in my US History, at this point I felt what*
> *could I lose if a disturbance broke out in my room, why would it matter after all*
> *the things that had already happened. The process drama was based on the*
> *Elizabeth Eckford story, how she tried to enter Little Rock High School by herself*
> *through an angry mob…there was an amateur photographer there that took*
> *pictures, they are quite astounding. The process drama requires that the students*
> *freeze frame into the scenes in the pictures. The other students in the class are*
> *asked questions about the pictures. (At UNCG I had the students say how they*
> *were feeling being the characters in the pictures, I did not think this would be*
> *wise, with the sensitivity of the students.) The students then relate what they*
> *"feel" or see in the pictures. Much like using the codifications or pictures, for*
> *them to decode, in the process drama they actually decode themselves. I actually*
> *felt I could spend some time on this due to my place in the textbook.*
> *The students did a great job and were very insightful in their observations. They*
> *always seemed to be able to pick out where the power was in the pictures without*
> *much, help. It was hard for them to put more than just superficial feelings into*
> *their descriptions. To get them to think deeper would have been nice, but I was*
> *very impressed how they behaved and felt that the activity was important, which I*
> *would not have thought.*

Out of all the codifications the students seem to get the most from this procedure.

The answers and conversation were profound and interesting. The students showed

critical thought and insight. I was very happy about the outcome of this critical exercise.

I had found something interesting. The only difficulty was that it took a good deal of

time to set up and prepare. Some of the student's insights are presented in the next

journal.

12-4 FJ
One of the students said that he felt the confusion of the crowd and the anger. He said that he could see herself siding with the mob for no reason other than she didn't want to be standing out in the crowd, defending Elizabeth. It made him sad and thoughtful that he would not have defending her, just because it was the right thing to do. I told him that many times the right thing is always the hardest. He said, you always say that, now I understand.
Another student said she was very mad, and related a story from the previous week where she had not defended her friend, even though she knew she was right, because she did not want to make her boyfriend mad. The drama made her reflect on that.
The whole class enjoyed it. As Jim was leaving the room, he said, he wished he knew what was going on in my big old head. I told him that he already knew, he smiled and said that he did..
Today has put a huge smile on my face.

Some of the students were beginning to show change, not many. I began to journal about exactly why I thought that I was having an effect on my students and if that effect had created some democratic thought. This was a particularly good day in a sea of bad.

12-9 FJ
The most that I could come up with was that I listened to them. I didn't just blow them off and think that what they knew was non-knowledge. They said that they liked that I was "real".
Then I tried to qualify, what does it mean to be "real"? They said that I told them the truth, or what they perceived as the truth, I didn't hold back or paint a rosy picture.
One of the students said "You believe us when we say something, you call us out when you think we are bullshitting you and but most of all you are there, listening to us.
Wow, what an awesome thing to say. I said, you mean I take the time to believe in you? Yeah, that's it. You believe that we can be something. They indicated that took a lot of listening to actually know them, who they were "really" without all the posturing and gang inferences. I saw them as People.
This was awesome, I felt that I finely was making some progress…in this dissertation stuff.
Not only was the critical pedagogy, changing their perception of the world, it changes their perception of me personally. That I was taking the time from the

"official" curriculum to understand them first and second, helping them to
understand their world, to be a part of them enough to be willing to help them
beyond the curriculum. This was great stuff.
They didn't want to talk about it for a long time, just a brief interlude in the day.
I felt that I was on a cloud the rest of the day!

It is interesting when I look at the dates of my journals I would have good days and bad

days and they could be side by side. I have never looked at my life in this manner. It

seems insane to be ranting on one day about how bad it is and be satisfied on another

about how everything is working out. Is the nature of critical work so demanding that it

causes your life to be more volatile? I am a very stable person, at least I thought, but

when I read this post and then some of the others that are close in date, I seem

schizophrenic.

After I became more comfortable with the process of codifications I began to use

anything that I thought related to their lives. I used poetry and drawing, anything that

was a-typical to help the students see differently. Some worked this particular exercise

only seemed to work with one student.

12-17 AJ
Interpreting a Langston Hughes poem
Underlining the strong or important words and then labeling an Alfredo Sabat
cartoon. with the words they had underlined from the poem...then we discussed
them after the poem was labeled..it was a good discussion, but only one student
understood it.

The final liberatory exercise that I attempted was a collage. The description of it is in the

journal post below. It worked rather well. The students were asked to explain the

importance of the collage and then allow the class to ask them questions about it. It

provided an interesting platform and we finally were able to address some issues of

advertising. The students enjoyed it and it was their final exam in psychology.

> *1-4 FJ*
> *I assigned the final project today. Decided to do a liberatory project for*
> *Psychology. It does not follow the standard course of study, but it should provide*
> *an interesting discussion and learning platform.*
> *The first part is creating a collage from magazine pictures. The students are*
> *asked to select pictures that concern them either good or bad. They are in the*
> *process of doing the 1ˢᵗ part of the project now and are enjoying the freedom that*
> *creation entails. They are communicating with one another and totally immersed*
> *in the action.*
> *The second step was to have them bring pictures from home, of people place*
> *events and things.*
> *The third step will be to analyze the pictures for questions that can be addressed*
> *back to the pictures. This should make the students address some of the points of*
> *their lives. It should add relevance and interest to an otherwise boring topic.*
> *Once these questions are recorded the class can move to answer or discuss some*
> *of the findings from their initial exposure to each other's pictures.*
> *Then they will take their various pictures and make a collage of both their*
> *magazine pictures and their personal pictures. They can either make a joint*
> *collage or each have their own it will be up to them. They will (if they decide)*
> *write some of the questions directly across the college or not. This would remind*
> *them of the questions they asked or they can decide to leave it with just the*
> *pictures. So when people look at it they can come to their own questions.*
> *I will also have them do a brief class on why colleges are important and why they*
> *help create an interesting perspective.*
> *They seem to be very interested and excited about being able to create their own*
> *curriculum and have shown a great deal of enjoyment in the beginning of the*
> *activity.*

The "liberatory collage" worked well but didn't have the punch that I was looking for. I

really wanted a cathartic moment and it didn't come with this codification or any of the

others.

The most effective of all the on intentional codifications was the "process drama".

The students enjoyed and took a great deal away from the process. I am still not sure if

any had the profound effect that I believed I would have when I started this project. So much of critical pedagogy seems to be based on the faith of the people you are trying to help. If you believe in them, truly believe in them (I am still not sure I believed in these students), and they in you then the process can work. I have had students come up to me years later and mention something I have done that affected their lives, and not remember it at all.

Conclusion

The posts reflected and viewed at a temporal distance have given me a fresh viewpoint from which to study my actions and my school. What I thought would be intensely painful was more constructive than destructive. My resolve is apparent, which is pleasing in light of all the negative feelings I initially had about the experience.

The process itself was much less painful than the months preceding thinking about it. I literally dreaded it. I could not face myself, or my perceived failure teaching. I would try to begin the process or look back at the journals and would not be able to get through hardly any of them. I felt totally helpless during that year, like I could not get my bearings. I had not ever felt like that since I started teaching,

The processes itself was much better than I ever thought it would be. I thought it might make me never want to teach again, instead it helped me understand teaching. The initial review of the journals was the most painful, the raw nature seemed to rip at my heart. I had not completely transcribed all of them, so I even had to hear my voice as I finished the last bit of it. That was terrible, I could hear my despair. But once I started

putting them in themes and critically looking at the overall content of them they didn't seem so bad.

One of the greatest fears I had in doing the process would be that I would make the teachers and administrators that I worked with seem like monsters. I loved these people, especially the principal and many of the teachers. It was not that I saw them as bad people, but I knew that I was angry when I had written many of the journals and I thought that I would take out many of the problems on them. As I was engaged in the reflective process I realized that it was not all them, much of it was transferred to them through existing power structures and society itself. This was a great relief because the teachers and administrators had done wonderful things with the students on many other occasions. I understood through the process I was mainly disgusted with myself and what we as teachers had let the system become in the name of education. Once I began to see from this perspective I felt less inhibited and could function in the process. It actually became therapeutic and rewarding.

If I had stopped the process before I had actually done the temporal introspection, it would have been devastating. I would have lost an extreme amount of confidence in teaching and my own personal worth. The literature on the process does not mention how dangerous it is to rip open yourself and view your inner space. The autobiographical methodology should have had a label saying "dangerous if not finished" in the literature. It took the muster of the greatest amount of courage I have ever accessed to begin the process. I am very happy that I did, the understandings that were revealed stilled my aching heart and gave me hope for the future.

The value of this type of research is twofold. The first benefit is that it uncovers concepts and processes that cannot be accessed directly in positivistic research. If I had asked the students or the teachers the questions directly, because much of the information I was trying to uncover resided in me, the answers would have been diluted and abstract. Not as cathartic and moving. The second benefit is that the process empowers the researcher/ subject. The researcher feels the whole process and findings revealed in the research, it is a lived experience. This is profound, because the researcher is not outside the research, he is one with it. The only thing that I can equate it to is a religious experience; it had that kind of feeling or affect. I have personally grown stronger because of the process.

The following chapter will be a final reflection of some of my direct understandings and findings that have been revealed in the process. As mentioned before they are not direct answers in most cases, but may even allude to other interests or questions. Once that has occurred I will try to compare or relate the findings to the ideal of the Collected Realized Self-Governed Citizen. This should indicate and relate notions of positive freedom and pedagogical citizenship if any were created within the experimental time frame.

Because this is such a personal experience, I am not sure how much external use these findings will be to an outside observer. It is my hope that they can benefit critical pedagogy and the foundations of citizenship in this country. The final Chapter will also make suggestions for future research on this topic as well as suggestions for schools and educators who wish to practice critical theory and democracy.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The boundaries of the actual are no more fixed and rigid than the elasticity of our imaginations (Thoreau, 1999, p. 5).

Truth is in effect not separable from intelligibility; to know is not simply to record, but always to comprehend (Levinas, 1969, p. 82).

At the same time, I was immersed in the halls of academia with professors who studied theory, and I began to learn that some of the practical lessons that I often devised on a whim actually had academic merit (Gruwell, 2009, p. xxi).

The process recorded in the previous chapter provided insight into the teaching methods that attempt to create positive freedom and good citizenship from the students in an alternative public school class. As the process took place, some distinct features and nuances emerged from the analysis. This final chapter will highlight some of these findings as they are perceived by the researcher. The findings are not considered complete because, as with all introspective work much of what is comprehended is dependent on the ingenuous knowledge of the reader. The lens from which this research is read binds two worlds, that of the reader and that of the research, which intertwine to create an original and personal understanding. Most teachers who read this work will feel a connection to their own work, no matter how critically they teach. One of the complex discoveries of this study is the common bond experienced between teachers and this piece of research.

The original intention of this dissertation was to describe, practice, and investigate processes and tensions involved in attempts to practice critical pedagogy in a public school classroom and to facilitate democratic values and behavior. That intention has been expanded to include information that can help teachers preparing for, or interested in the practice of critical/ liberatory pedagogy, and insight into the lived experience of this style of teaching. The inclusion of this information is to increase the understanding of the existential processes of pedagogical citizenship and to facilitate the coping skills needed to survive them, helping to create a cadre of teachers prepared and ready to initiate change on the systemic processes of the public school system.

Reflection on the Attempt to Teach for Democracy

According to the autobiographical process there are extreme tensions between the role of authority/ control and the ability to practice democracy in the classroom. In the public school setting investigated there is no place for democratic practice, other than on a very small scale. Democratic options are limited to superficial and meaningless applications within the school hierarchy- simply put, the structure dominates the school day, not freedom and choice. Democratic practice requires freedom and the school day simply is not free. The students are not allowed to democratically vote on any school policies or rules, or effectively challenge them. The students just follow the rules as mandated, or get punished. The entire environment is controlled. Therefore freedom of thought is very difficult because no physical freedoms are practiced in this particular school setting. The only freedom that can occur is freedom initiated by the classroom teacher if there is time, and this can only occur on a very small scale.

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Curriculum

Non state tested courses/ classes have the greatest chance of developing collective critical thought and liberatory pedagogy because the teacher has time to investigate topics with the students that can move toward critical democratic thought. The official History curriculum because of its shallow but broad nature inclines, students to the absence of critical thought. Critical work requires time and patience, neither of which are built into the demands and pace of the curriculum.

In non-tested courses the teacher can begin the practice of planning codifications and present them to the class, which enables the students to begin to think critically. In order for students to successfully adopt a critical democratic mindset, time must be at the teacher's discretion and appropriately allotted, just following the curriculum does not provide sufficient practice. Therefore, this dissertation indicates that critical/ liberatory work can only be performed on a limited scale, within the confines of the traditional curriculum, which makes it insignificant and powerless.

Autocratic Power Structures

The power structure in the school creates the mindset that critical work has no value, as it is not part of traditional teaching methods. The curriculum claims to support the democratic process, but in practice does not, in this researcher's opinion, produce critical thought. The indications of this are the problems that occurred from trying to produce critical thought in this particular classroom/ school. The benefit of this school is that the administration was willing to let the research happen and try to move to a critical mindset even if in practice it was extremely difficult for them to accept and understand.

The administration was reluctant, in part, because of the enormous strain put upon a school to follow the rules and laws required by the state. The pressure to adhere to such policies makes acceptance of critical work seem insubordinate to administrative superiors.

Interaction

The greatest indication of critical work during the research period is in personal conversations/ interactions with the students, which happened separate from the curriculum. The nature of the school mandates the need for small class sizes- an advantage which affords the teacher time to converse with students. Through dialogue, the teacher can move toward critical inquiry with the student. The teacher must remain open to developing relationships with students- a problematic aspect of this process, when the mental and physical abuse experienced by the students makes the contact required for critical work difficult. The research indicates that the teacher must be constantly aware that critical work may take place and be prepared for it. Even a teacher trained in critical work can have difficulty if caught unprepared for such emotionally draining topics and students. A recommendation of this research is that the school attempt to bring in a full time counselor to address many of the students emotional and personal problems. The counselor would be solely responsible for counseling the students and not testing or scheduling duties that are required of the current school counselor, which make actual counseling difficult.

Critical Resistance

If democratic functions or critical functions are performed in the target school they sometimes create a backlash from the administration and cause the teacher and students' hardship. Most confrontations with the administration occurred from the strict interpretation of the dress code. As discussed in the autobiographical process, this excessive authority and control create tension in both teacher and student that can create additional discipline problems. Many times the strict adherence to the dress code caused its own set of unique problems and created much more tension than the policy itself. The policy was designed to help with security and have students become used to dressing business casual. The attitude of the enforcement was so severe and negative, at times it caused students great difficulty.

The damage this interpretation of the dress code did to the students and staff was seen in the amount of write-ups and disorderly conduct charges directly or indirectly related to the code. The constant barrage of complaints from this teacher to the administration became a burden on them, but the research indicates that constant pressure is needed to change these oppressive interpretations of already dominating policies. The research period was not long enough to ascertain the effectiveness of the interventions and pressure created by this teacher.

The tension created by critical resistance can be so high at times it tends to produce futility. In a few of the posts this researcher is not happy with teaching at all, and even mentions quitting. The tension felt is making it hard for liberatory teaching to occur and if it does the teacher is constantly concerned about causing problems with the

power structure in the school and being insubordinate. The concern can cause the teacher's belief in their activity to affect the function of the specific activity itself, making it valueless and not an effective pedagogical tool: for example, movement activities get chaotic and may not be considered instructional, so are stopped before they could become effective. Also, the tension increases with more open and less subtle activities. Many of the events described in the posts wherein communication with the principal, takes place an event had already happened, performing opinions, halting the potential for compromise- the essence of democracy.

The resistance displayed by both the students and teachers had the potential to cause great difficulty, but instead, was one of the greatest signs of democracy. An example of the before mentioned resistance is when the students challenge the dress-code regardless of the consequences. There are many examples of resistance within the journals, from teacher and student, showing that democracy begins to bud in even the strictest of situations.

Overall the research indicated that critical thought that brings with it democratic practice was almost impossible in the tightly controlled school setting described in the research. There were instances of critical breakthroughs, but they were on individual basis and very rarely on a group level. The high level of control contributed to the inability to practice democratic processes and functions. The state curriculum and the censorship of the internet, limited the ability to address controversial issues. Therefore critical/ libratory practice could not happen at a classroom level. There was no time for the students to reflect upon and process any work that was attempted. Without practice

the students were exposed to critical pedagogy, but the environment did not support it, thus rendering democratic functions and the critical process impotent.

The inability for democratic practice does not seem to be confined to this location. Much of the rules that inhibit its practice come from the state or federal level, for example, the curriculum, and school operation policies. It might be that state mandated rules and regulations are the culprits responsible for the tension created by the administration.

The idea of self-regulation was not a tested issue because the environment was standardized. There were no instances where the environment was unregulated so the student's self-regulation could be realized or tested. Many students may have had the capacity to self-regulate but it was never tested on a broad enough scale to determine the extent of their abilities.

Liberatory Connection

One of the main interests of this research was to attempt to locate the teacher's point of liberatory connection with the students. The research indicates three locations of liberatory connections to students.

The first location of liberatory connection to the student is in dialogue. The students respond positively because the time has been taken to truly model the effectiveness of being listened to. Listening seems to be the greatest contact point in personal liberatory work. The students have to believe that you are listening or that you care to listen. Even there isn't time to listen right at the moment of their distress or interest, it's important to pause and provide them with instruments of expression (paper,

pens, crayons) to help them begin to express themselves until they can be given the instructor's full attention. This seems to be the most important liberatory and critical skill that this researcher has developed, because it helps build trust and empathy.

The second location is the notion that they understand, that, their part of the conversation is important. Their input is valued, as Freire says, I appreciate their ingenous knowledge (Freire, 1970). It means something to me, what they are saying. This, however, does not mean that one doesn't get fatigued and want them to "stop talking"; it means that, in general, great value is given to their knowledge. This characteristic is an indication of respect, which many times breeds thoughtfulness on the receiver, which has been noted in the posts.

The third is believing in their future worth, or worth to society. An ability to see them in the future as productive members of society seems to alter their view of this researcher. They perceive the instructor as someone who believes in them no matter how off track they are at the time. This ability to see their future success enables them to feel differently about themselves and in doing so, they can perceive the world around them differently.

In doing this research there is an indication that critical pedagogy is a truly human experience. There are many instances that the unique understandings are so fluid that it requires a very personal (human) type application. The ability to adjust understanding and instruction based on nuances perceived by the teacher based on student response is the essence of critical teaching. That is why according to the findings of this research an autocratic management structure within a school creates so much tension; an autocratic

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structure has difficulty adjusting to the needs of its populace. A democratic environment best suits the needs of a school attempting a system that functions critically. A democratic school's environment is more adept at having critical reflective processes in place, because the system has the ability to shift to the demands of the society, and the critical work itself.

Internal Conflict

According to this research the critical teacher is always in conflict with their own educational background and experience, especially the idea of power. In the autobiographical process there is a whole section devoted to power (The Power Problem). Power structures in a teacher's life have a great deal to do with the ability to teach critically and with liberatory zeal. Even a teacher, who has studied critical pedagogy, however, has problems negotiating power in the classroom. What is enough power to guide the conversation but not kill the input from the students? This problem is lived in the journals within the autobiographical process. There is no simple answer to this problem and it continues to be a struggle for teachers of critical pedagogy. Again, critical thought relegates itself to personal reflection and adjustment, a purely human trait, one that has no answer, one that must be lived. The teacher must be reminded of it, through personal reflection again and again, especially if the teacher is from an autocratic educational experience, as most teachers are. The power problem does not go away and can be a hindrance to critical pedagogy and democracy if not reflected upon and adjusted.

The leveling of power structures within the democratic schools movement indicates that autocratic power structures are also a hindrance to a practiced democracy

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and political reflection on them is necessary for democracy to continue into the future. The research indicates that democracy cannot exist within an autocratic system, which is interesting because when one thinks of our democracy one doesn't think of all the autocratic functions that surround it, which begs the questions, Do we even have a democracy?

Collective Democratic Practice

One of the initial questions that considered was, is there any collective democratic practice in this public school? I can say the research indicates that there is no democratic practice in this school. Democracy is only addressed in the Civics and US History curriculum as an abstract concept not as a practice. This is the case with most of the schools encountered by this teacher and certainly by the target school.

The assumption here is that the problems that were mentioned in Chapter One, such as militarism, reduction of public space, the social imaginary, are all systemic problems first encountered in schooling. The social reflection of society has either affected the schools or vice versa. The problems mentioned in Chapter One are not addressed at all in the target school. The target school actually exacerbates these problems by greater militarization of the school culture than a regular school. Therefore, when an attempt was made to confront these problems critically, it was found that they were not only entrenched in the culture of the school, but also in the characteristics of the social culture at large.

Peer critical reflection

It is not a surprise that the staff struggles to critically reflect upon their lives, democracy, and teaching. Critical thought is difficult and risky. As the journal posts indicate many people do not reflect on their lives, because of the constant attempt of our society to reduce risk. The risk is that the teacher will uncover something negative about their teaching and have to change. The staff lacks all awareness of their ability to reflect critically and do not understand the power of reflection – it is a process they have not encountered and so struggle to see through the commercial fog and the comfort of their lives. The problems that the students have are seen as personal and not systemic. They have not been reflected on with discourse and inquiry because the school and school system are not democratic structures. The school does not encourage critical thought itself, because the structures to support it, as the research indicates, do not exist.

Conclusion

The initial premise of this dissertation is that there is a **crisis of democracy in our country**. It is the opinion of this research that, at least in this school, there is no indication that democracy is practiced at all, thus exacerbating this crisis. There is only lip service in a few classes but no actual practice. My foundational question remains, how are we going to have a democracy if we cannot practice it?

If schools do not teach young Americans how to practice democracy with an infinite number of decisions that have to be made in response to freedom, how are we going to be very good at it? Whose job is it to teach students democracy if not the public

schools? Why are we not creating schools that at their foundation practice and teach

democracy? How are we going to have a democracy without practice?

These questions mentioned above are valid and beneficial when reflected upon by

teachers, parents, citizens and scholars in this country. They are not fringe issues, but

foundational. As the research suggests, critical thinking, the impetus for freedom, is

difficult and sometimes painful. Practice should be a valid part of any functioning

democratic culture, but where is it? Therefore, my original premise seems to stand- **there**

is a crisis of democracy in this country, and this school, as well as any other

autocratic school, is a part of the crisis.

There is hope for this specific school. The research indicates that this school in

particular because of the small class size and ability to manipulate schedules and time,

could create a culture of critical thought. Complete democratic practice would be out of

the question, because of the mandates of the State Board of Education, but critical

thought is a real possibility. The leadership would have to embrace the idea of critical

thought, which can be a difficult component to address in one's leadership style, but there

is hope, at least at this location. The staff has the intelligence and the ability to create a

critical mindset, if there is leadership toward such a process.

In many of the journal entries there is a sense of frustration and disillusionment of

my utopian view of the school held in the past. The privilege to come back and

experience such a change and being afforded the opportunity to reflect on personal

understandings and education is valuable. One of the questions addressed was, what had

changed to affect the culture of the school so much? It has been pondered over and over,

without the emergence of an answer, other than the students went from subjects that could change, to objects that had to be managed; there was a loss of hope. Was it the school culture or this researcher's understanding that changed? The research continues in an attempt to understand this occurrence.

An in depth consideration of this final reflection, was an attempt to understand and locate the processes that create the Collected Realized Self-Governing Citizen, it was noticed that the act of trying to find the process creates the citizen, it is a constant search. The practice of critical pedagogy and democratic thought, located the citizen within. The practice created the citizen. The target school did contribute to creating one citizen- this researcher. An ability to practice, even on a limited scale, made pedagogical citizenship a possibility. This description is simplified, because there were other factors, such as academic study that occurred outside the school and community work, but the time factor and the fact that the school was small, was a definite benefit. Time, critical practice, and democratic dialogue seem to be the keys to pedagogical citizenship.

Other critical teachers should find solace in that they do not carry this burden alone. The lived experience of the citizen/ teacher is painful and sometimes dangerous. The critical teacher carries the revealed burdens of society on their shoulders and the tension can be great. It is hoped that by reading this dissertation teachers can rest easier knowing that there is a great pool of critical thought within our society that will, with a bit of coaxing, bubble up and make great changes. It has in the past and it can again. Student's faces awaken and know the world differently, when engaged in critical thought/ the democratic process. Understanding this fact gives one hope for change and this hope

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keeps the critical scholar moving forward in their desire for freedom and democracy. We are strong, we are committed, and we have a vision- that is all it has ever taken to shake down vast autocratic structures.

The future implication of the research is profound, but not original. The current autocratic school model is dangerous for democracy. The students/ citizens do not have the ability to practice democracy; therefore they are not good at it. Public schools should be in the practice of producing democratic citizens as a primary function. The public school model has to be critically reflected upon by teachers themselves and a new vision must be established if democracy is to continue.

The rigid curriculum must be addressed as well as the establishment of test public schools that are democratic in design. The cost effectiveness of these schools is documented. As a starting point each system should have at least one or two of these schools in operation so their ideas can be studied for practical information about democracy and critical schooling en mass.

In society there is an indication that democracy and critical though needs to be embraced as a mainstay of our culture. Commercialism needs to be curtailed so foundational democratic insights are seen, valued and learned. Public discourse and space needs to be emphasized as part of the rights of the citizen. The responsibility of the media in a democratic republic is to address its lack of critical thought, by implementing critical journalism. Citizens themselves need to bear the burden of truth when they repeat things that they hear, read, or see. The process of being a citizen should come with the critical ability of finding the truth on an issue before it is repeated as fact. The mandate

of citizenship should include the demand of critical thought and schools should address this concept. In order to accomplish this citizenship and education must be a unified entity- in essence, a convergence of body (practice) and mind (abstract concept); a pedagogical citizenship.

To prepare teachers for critical pedagogy, education colleges and universities should have several classes on critical theory as well as peer critical reflection on systemic and local process that address the same autocratic structures at the collegiate level. These structures need to be critically reflected upon to embrace change at the state and school system level. University and college education schools should have a mandate for democratic practice and critical thought. Both these processes should be at least valued as much as current education schools embrace evaluation, assessment strategies and best practice techniques.

The individual teacher needs to understand that critical pedagogy gives their teaching work depth and meaning. Reflection and journal writing is recommended by this work as a tool for understanding and personal therapy. The ability of this process to help create understanding and purpose from teaching is documented in this dissertation.

The teacher should also pick schools for employment, if possible, that lend themselves to critical work. There are indicators that can be seen in a staff which embraces the liberatory experience, the greatest of these being humor and boldness. These two characteristics, along with reflection, can help create a culture of change in the school, no matter how difficult it may seem.

According to this research there is always a level of stress associated with this type of teaching. Therefore, teachers embracing this mindset as well as practicing critical pedagogues should get a valid amount of exercise. The researcher in this dissertation gets approximately one- two hours worth of exercise at least five days a week. The exercise helped the researcher cope with the stress of teaching for liberation.

Community organizations can help the liberatory/ critical teacher to locate and connect with other people not associated with education. This can help to provide a stable foundation for the teacher that has nothing to do with their employment. These connections can help the teacher manage stress while teaching critically. The researcher of this dissertation is in the beginning process of organizing a community arts center in a part of town serviced by the target school. This type of work helps to ground the teacher in the lived experience of their students and gives a concrete face to the impetus for changing the systemic and conceptual problems of schools.

From the above connections between teachers, community activists, and one's personal health, teachers and others can share and plan for change. The sharing can just consist of letting off steam about occurrences during the day or sharing a specific strategy that helped create critical thought. All these practices will help ground and center the critical teacher and protect them from the pain and pressure that the research indicates that critical/ liberatory teaching produces.

The outcome of this dissertation has indicated that educators must embrace critical pedagogy and democratic principles to facilitate the practice of democracy. Without these in place the public school system is just a means of repression and control,

and not fertile ground for democracy. The findings have a grim stance, but the possibilities that have been opened by the examples of the reflective process are infinite because each reader gleans something different from their readings.

The hope of this dissertation on a public level is awareness. The public findings indicate that there is a distinct cultural possibility for change, and that all it will take is for a collected group of educators to take an interest in the practice of democracy, if that occurred there would be sweeping change. The private findings of this dissertation indicate the ability of practiced personal reflection to create understanding, empowerment, and growth.

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APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

The crisis this dissertation described in the first chapter was attributed to the lack

of critical thinking and democratic practice in education. The research indicated that

citizens of our democracy do not think critically about their lives and the world around

them.   The researcher noted that some of his students, on a limited basis began to think

critically and have democratic understandings. This premise required an investigation of

the teachers use of critical pedagogy and democratic practice. Therefore, the first

purpose of this research was to locate teaching that produces critical thought and

subjecthood. The second purpose was to address the practice of citizenship and how

that functions within the confines of public school education. These two purposes

would help the researcher understand how teaching played a role in the process of

liberation.

The autobiographical practice in Chapter Four concentrated on the lived teaching

experience of one person in the public school classroom. In order to grasp the nuances, a

scope of the everyday, that reflects the teacher's inner feelings and teaching intuition, to

lie bare the insecurities and frustrations, an autobiographical type of exploration was

chosen. As Grumet explains, "The scrutiny of what is ordinary requires a critical

approach to the social and political environment, for the 'ordinary' is a social concept, an

unquestioned assumption of the natural attitude" (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 43). The

preliminary discussion created by the initial investigation can only be answered by

placing the researcher directly into the context and getting a "reading" from that

experience. I, the researcher, will be subject and object of this investigation. The direct experience of the introspection, to be seamless with the context, should elevate understanding. Temporal distance from the described events enabled the researcher to uncover nuances within thinking, stylistics and environment that admits or denies subjecthood within the students.

Context

The school researched was a small alternative middle and high school located in North Carolina (Coastal Alternative Academy). The Academy was not technically a school but a program located within the Vocational Directorship of the county school administration, thus the funding was provided from the "At Risk" budget. The program was referred to as a school, because this is the way it was perceived in the county system. The school's name was changed to protect the reputations of the teachers and administrators.

The school was housed in several buildings and mobile classrooms on approximately 100 acres in the outlying countryside of a large town. The student population varied between 20- 110 depending on the referrals from the feeder schools in the county.

The students were referred to the school based on the recommendation from the School Board or the Principal of their home (feeder) school. There was an intake process where the student was informed of the school rules, dress code and other information on how the school operates. The parents had to be in attendance for this meeting. Referrals include but are not limited to: bringing a weapon on the home school campus, teacher

altercations, low achievement, fighting, attendance, and anything that intensely irritates an administrator of the student's home school.

The students have goals that were created during the intake meeting. These goals include academic, attendance and behavior. Records were kept of the status of these goals for the students by their advisory teachers and the administration. Once these goals were met the students return to their home schools. The exceptions to this included, school board decisions, home school requests for the students return and parental change of location outside the county. There also were experimental placements back at the home school if the student had shown improved but not met his/ her goals.

Behavior goals were charted on a point sheet that the student takes around from class to class. The sheet consisted of 3 part paper, one copy went home to the parent or guardian, the second to the office, the third to the advisory teacher of the student. At the end of the week the students who met their behavior points were allowed to attend an activity for the last half of the day, this was designed to provide additional incentive to the student to behave.

The students ranged from 12 years old to 21. The middle and high school were maintained as separate as possible, but there was some contact between the groups, such as the bus ride to and from the school. The students, according to the rules of the program, were not allowed to have contact between middle and high. The ages of the students in the classroom studied were 14-18. Their names in the original journals were changed to protect their privacy.

The race mix maintained an average of 40% white, 40% black and 20% other, to include Hispanic, Asian, and other races. The defining aspect of the school generally was poverty, with over 90% of the students being on free or reduced lunch.

The school administration was overseen by a Director and Assistant Director. The Directors main function was the overall administration of the school as well as County Office Administration meeting attendance and hiring. The Assistant Director's position was in charge of discipline and administrative functions, such as the Safe School Plan, fire drills, and maintenance.

There were approximately 12 teachers 3 teachers' aides and 2 custodians. The academic discipline breakdown is as follows: 2 social studies teachers, 2 math teachers, 1 science teacher, 1 art teacher, 2 English teachers, 2 vocational teachers (Business, Construction Tech.), 1 special needs teacher, 1 Computer Lab Teaching Assistant, and 2 Teacher's aides.

Research Methodology

Autoethnographical explorations involve the life and thinking of the participant as curriculum (Pinar, 2000). Originally used by many famous philosophers, such as Locke and Hobbes, the method has risen to prominence in many different scientific fields, to include, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology and education (Pinar, 2000; The Principles of Knowledge Creation, 2007). Developed as a framework for the field of psychology by Wilhelm Wundt, the process was used to uncover feelings buried within the subconscious, or in the background of the conscious. Due to the advent of

behaviorism and the precepts of scientific positivism it fell out of fashion for scientific research.

As Madeleine Grumet (1976) explains discussing the process of Currere introspection:

> Currere's reply to the traditional empirical paradigm is a return to the experience of the individual, respecting all those qualities which disqualify it for consideration in the behavioral sciences: idiosyncratic history, its pre-conceptual foundation, its contextual dependency, its innate freedom expressed in choice and self- direction. As educators we alone must bring into being the tradition which we elect to carry on; existential phenomenology (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 45).

As Grumet mentions introspection is appropriate for educational research because of its privilege of the lived experience. Curere introspection has been a valid research process since the mid 1970s in the hope of unlocking information that cannot be accessed by traditional positivistic research.

Introspection has also risen back to validity in other fields, being used for market studies in business schools. (TPOKC, 2007) As Maria Frostling- Henningsson (2007) relates:

> The first introspective studies (market) were published at the beginning of the 1990s. The method has mainly gained acceptance in consumer behavior theory studies and in studies conducted by researchers using qualitative methods in the U.S. Also there have been studies in economics based on introspection as a research method. (TPOKC, p. 169)

Introspective discoveries are valuable, not in a positivistic sense, but in a practical, emotive, and therapeutic sense. The autobiographical process enables the researcher to form a model of self-discovery that can uncover hidden insights and

applications. It can also lead to other discoveries or research interests. As Marilyn Doerr

(2004) states, "The 'I' is the location of a stream of possibilities" (p. 15). Not only can

new discoveries take place but also the ability once realized to manifest change

exponentially. What Doerr is referring to is that the process can not only be for discovery

but have a therapeutic dimension for the user. As the process unfolds the learner can see

himself embedded in his thinking and actions. Once this occurs, a new understanding

takes place, which can become the impetus for change.

The autobiographical method selected due to its educational practice is Currere.

The process of Currere is based on the work of William Pinar, a curriculum theorist. As

Doerr (2007) relates, "Pinar wanted to change the emphasis of curriculum theory from

one of prescription and guidance to one of understanding" (p. 8). As Pinar explains:

> The study of Currere, as the Latin infinitive suggests, involves the investigation of
> the nature of the individual experience of the public: of artifacts, actors,
> operations, of the educational journey or pilgrimage. So understood, the field is
> not only an environment- producing discipline, involving the formulation of
> objectives, design, even criticism, as it is understood presently. It is a knowledge-
> producing discipline, with its own method of inquiry and its own area of
> investigation. (Pinar, 2000, p. 400)

Therefore the subject creates a definitive understanding from their own experience. The

curriculum is not of where one should be, it is of where one is. Pinar (1976) describes,

"Currere is suggesting that its subjects be beside themselves, be in attendance upon that

interpretation of their experience that comprises their view of reality" (p. 141).

The Currere process involves the researcher creating an autobiography

(journaling) about their lives or parts of their lives, then at a later date interrogating those

journals for clues and answers to the lived contextual questions presented in the research. "In this research the epistemological subject and the research subject become one" (Pinar & Grumett, 1970, p. 84). Instead of the researcher and subject being separate they are the same, but there is a temporal difference. The journals are temporally distanced from the analysis, to provide a space to obtain a more objective but connected stance. The researcher records the journals, then steps back and analyzes them for clues to the research questions. In the process vivid patterns and nuances can be uncovered and with them answers to research questions or/ and further questions to be explored. As Grumar (1976) explains about Pinar's process:

> He is describing a process of self-distantiation mirrored in currere's assertion that it is not the names that we give to reality that provide the developmental surge of autobiography, but the process of naming that permits the very structures that were running the writer to become the objects of his scrutiny. (Pinar & Grumar, p. 131)

Within this process is a discovery of the unconscious. Thus many masked or muted feelings may arise that the researcher can address, and in doing so can fundamentally change his/ her understanding of life.

Once some of the underlying concepts and happenings are exposed they can be modified, or deleted to help improve the research and also lead to the uncovering of an underlying cause for others to understand and ones-self. The process produces a two-fold analysis. The researcher is analyzing the obvious phenomenon described in the journal, but he/ she also may analyze the reaction of the analysis on his/ her current thought.

Again Grumet explains:

> So may Currere reveal through the autobiographic record of educational experience, through one's responses to literature, or mathematics, or science, essential recurring forms. An individual encounter in the world is consulted not to reveal the particular truth of its facticity, but its general truth as in emerges in a community of multiple subjectivities and it's confirmed by subsequent encounters. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 42)

As the subject becomes object then back to subject there is analysis. Within this analysis is the possibility of discovering or uncovering some general truths about ones lived experience. The therapeutic bent is evident in Gumet's statement, and also the possibility of discovery not available to the positivistic researcher.

The subject in dissertation was the researcher, a unique characteristic of this process as mentioned in the rationale. The researcher is 47 years old and has been teaching approximately 7 years. His previous employment was in business management, approximately 25 years. He was a business manager for many years, then a business owner. The researcher chose teaching as a means to connect with society and give back some of the opportunity that he had been provided in his lifetime. He has enjoyed teaching for eight years. He is single and childless.

His primary subjects taught have been Civics, US History, World History and Cultural Foundations. The researcher's education consists of a BA in History and MED in Curriculum, Instruction and Supervision.

He has journaled extensively in his private life and also is an amateur abstract artist.

Reflective Process (Chapter IV)

The initial process began on October 2, 2009 with the first action journal. The journals were collected from October 2nd 2009 to January 20, 2010. Two distinct journals were created, Forced journals and Action journals.

Forced journals (FJ) were compiled at the rate of 3 a week, done on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, during weeks that had those days. Some weeks because of workdays made the writings happen on the following days. The forced journals were at a minimum one page. The process took place once the researcher was home and not in the confines of the school building. The time was approximately 4:00- 5:00 PM.

The second type of journal, the action journal (AJ) was done right after an occurrence that provoked intense or sustained emotion. These journals were designed to highlight happenings while the emotions were fresh. The action journals were written and recorded via digital tape recorder, or typed whichever was most convenient at the time. The dates and time periods of the Action Journals were scattered during the research phase.

The reflective process began with the researcher noting themes that stood out in the journals. There were seven themes that presented themselves when the initial review took place. They were: Finding A Voice, The Power Problem, Societal Holding Cell, An Activist Bent, The Punitive Structure, A Difficult Time, and A Critical Endeavour. The only order provided was that "A Critical Endeavour" be the ending section because of its more positive connotation. These themes became the headers of the sections of analysis, from the selected journals. Then specific journal entries were selected for their

depictions of the themes in the sections. The journals were then reflected upon using the foundations, insights and literature from the critical pedagogy, the democratic schools chapters and other relevant sources.

The selected entries from the journals were included within the reflective process to help the reader place-set and be referenced (in tone and voice) in the analysis. The researcher noted forms, both thematic and sublime within the text of the journals. Then there was an attempt to link them to the previous research in this dissertation and to other experiences in the researcher's life.

In the final chapter patterns were noted that informed the body of knowledge on critical teaching and democratic education. Also, indications for future study will be discussed as well as the weaknesses of the findings.

The findings were then compared to the ideals of education, Positive Freedom and the Collected Realized Self-governed Citizen. The final Chapter was also be the locus of suggestions for public schooling and further research.

The research indicated some of the tensions that teaching with a critical stance produces and some of the successes of this type of teaching. The research also indicated the possibilities of positive freedom as a product of public schooling. In conclusion the findings provided an empathic foundation for other teachers of critical theory, and citizenship, that they may find solace in their own activism, suffering and renewal.

Difficulties with the process

The autobiographical process was extremely difficult and stressful. Viewing ones work and life from such a critical stance affects many facets of life. The most profound

was self-esteem. Many times during this work the researcher was ready to give up teaching. There was an indication in one of the journals that equated critical teaching as a "curse" that once known, cannot be un-learned. Critical teaching is framed as a curse, a burden that became heavier with each attempt. It is a peril that the critical teacher cannot remove, it seems to be a part of the process. It is this weight drives the teacher forward even though it is frustrating. The recording of these pitfalls and failures makes the problems stand out to a greater degree.

One would think that there is an inherent bias in this process, none was located. If one had to make an experiential guess it was that the process makes the teacher/ researcher too critical. One would have thought before such a successful teacher embarked on the process, that the teaching for liberation would have been more successful or cathartic.   It simply was not. But, many times what this researcher initially viewed as a failure, after several phases of editing for clarity, was viewed differently. So maybe the bias adjusts itself once the temporal expanse becomes greater. One can't be sure within the scope of this research.

The distance from the subject was a definite requirement. Once the process started the raw material was able to be viewed differently. It was a learning/ understanding process that unfolded. The difficulty was not getting the distance from the subject, it was going back to the subject. This researcher did not want to look at the journals after they had been recorded, it would be too painful. But once the reflective process began, it was therapeutic and not painful. It could be termed healing. It was a

relief. As the journals were reflected on there was a greater understanding of the self, the world and teaching for liberation.. It was comforting

Because a new space was created from which to view the experiential journey there was a point located that uncovered how one was relating or reacting to the environment and also how one can change focus to form new grounds for involvement. As Joe Kincheloe confirms, "From our new vantage point we may be able to see those psychic realms that are formed by conditioning and unconscious adherence to social convention" (Pinar, 1998, p. 129).