

ABSTRACT

PAULO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY OF HOPE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASSROOM

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This autoethnographic study provides a critical analysis of the implementation of ideas and theories derived from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) in a social justice oriented classroom; in particular, themes of critical thinking, transformation, and social action are investigated through the voices of student participants. Through reflective narrative, I explore how Freire's humanist philosophy has influenced my educational practices as an instructor of higher education students. This inquiry utilizes qualitative data from undergraduate students, formal teaching observations, and interviews and on-going dialogue with a self-identified Freireian educator to help uncover how my students react to and reflect on my pedagogy. Student resistance to my implementation of Freire's ideas is closely examined to help me develop a more inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, addressing injustices pedagogically requires a shift in our educational language as well as an emphasis on critical thinking and liberatory education. Educators can resist traditional constraints placed upon them by embracing a new language and vocabulary that discloses injustice and facilitates inclusive classroom dialogue that encourages students to take social action against perceived injustices.

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PAULO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY OF HOPE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASSROOM

BY

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DEDICATION

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PREFACE

BRAZIL: AN IMMERSION IN FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

“With your feet on the ground, you can still learn”
(Freire, as reported by Paulo Rosa in a lecture, 2003).

At the beginning of my doctoral coursework, I participated in a study abroad trip to Brazil that immersed me in the work and life of Paulo Freire. This trip marked the beginning of an inspirational and enlightening eight years of pedagogical clarity and transformation that continues to this day. The trip was titled *Adult Education in Brazil: Social Movements, Popular Education, Freireian Practice, and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Northeastern Brazil*. It lasted approximately three weeks and included stops in Joao Pessoa, Recife, Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro. We participated in lectures at the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba, The Paulo Freire Institute at Pernambuco's Federal University, and the Universidade Estadual da Bahia. We visited historic centers, nonprofit organizations, and museums. In Joao Pessoa, we visited a Freireian-inspired education program called *Canteiro de Obra Ze Peao*, which is a literacy program for construction workers. In each city, we immersed ourselves in Brazilian cuisine and entertainment, which included eating a great deal of red meat, listening to inspirational music, and watching various dance performances. My participation in the study abroad trip to Brazil was one of the most beneficial aspects of my doctoral coursework. I have memories that will last a lifetime.

It took five plane rides and 24 hours to get to Joao Pessoa, which was our first stop on our trip. I was part of the group that arrived a day early and was pleased to have that extra day to get acclimated and walk the beautiful beaches of Paraiba. We spent the first week of the trip in Joao Pessoa and at the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba. We learned about the impact of Freire's ideas on education, as well as the history of adult education in northeastern Brazil. At the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba, we listened to lectures by Professors Elisa Gonsalves and Luis Gonzaga. The emphasis of their talks was on knowledge and experiences of common people and research in education. One of the first things I noticed at the university was that most of the college students were female. Entire classrooms were filled with women. The campus had a great feel to it; the energy from the students was electrifying. The students seemed genuinely happy to be in school.

Dr. Gonzaga gave us a brief overview of the history of education in Brazil, indicating that until the beginning of the 20th century, knowledge was fragmented, rustic at times, and unsophisticated. Starting in the 1950s, an interest in popular knowledge and organization emerged. Social inclusion began to permeate the Brazilian educational system. Until the 1970s, the major influence on popular education was Marxism from the French perspective. Education had to take place in alternative settings because of the military dictatorships. In the 1980s, new demands for social research, knowledge relations, and power relations became prevalent. Dr. Gonsalves stressed the importance of the human connection in education that takes place when students and teachers interact through dialogue. Dr. Gonzaga described Freire's belief that knowledge is not transferable; knowledge is created through collective

reactions to reality. He explained that a main objective of popular education is to bring the economic classes closer together.

One night, we broke into groups and visited Ze Peao literacy classes for construction workers. These programs were developed and implemented using Freire's ideas of liberation through critical literacy, conscientization, dialogue, praxis, and respect for the workers' language and lived experiences. Three other doctoral students and I accompanied Dr. Timothy Ireland. We met with two different groups of workers who were eager to learn about the United States. Interestingly, the first question they asked us was about the Iraq War and whether or not the war was still going on. They asked us about 9/11 and the impact it had on our country. I explained that Iraq was not involved in the attacks on 9/11 and that not all Americans support the Iraq War. One student asked if all Americans are rich and beautiful. I assured them that we are not and that the United States and Brazil have incredible similarities. I explained to them that we too have a huge gap between the rich and the poor, and we also struggle with racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. They seemed relieved to hear that Americans and Brazilians struggle in many of the same ways.

In Recife, we visited the Paulo Freire Institute at the Pernambuco's Federal University. Our first presenter was Dr. Paulo Rosa, the founder and president of the institute. He told us that on May 2, 1997, a group of scholars gathered to discuss the formation of a Paulo Freire Institute. Ironically, this is the exact day that Paulo Freire died. Seven days later, friends and other academics determined how to proceed with the institute. On May 29, 1998, the institute held its first public appearance (opening), which included a seminar on *The Thinking and Doing of Paulo Freire*. This was the official beginning of the Paulo Freire

Institute, which currently hosts international conferences on Freire's ideas. Every conference has a theme. For example, the 2002 theme was Paulo Freire Today. This year's theme is Ethics, Politics, and Education. A past theme was Education and Social Transformation.

The Paulo Freire Institute is currently taking on international recognition as it attempts to spread Freire's ideas throughout the world, as well as Brazil. In fact, they told us that Freire is often known better in countries other than in Brazil, and many Brazilian educators have little knowledge of Freire's ideas, which the professors argued, made the institute even more important to the educational movements in Brazil. Another effort of the institute is to reach beyond education and educators because Freire believed that his ideas should also be applied to areas other than education. They claimed that anyone who is oppressed can benefit from Freire's ideas. As a result, a conference planned later that year included a variety of disciplines, including health sciences.

Dr. Rosa explained that Freire believed learning is not a one-way transfer of information, rather it is an interaction between educators and students. In fact, one of his interests was the pedagogy of questioning which taught students how to participate in the learning process, rather than being passive consumers. Integral to these efforts is the search for feedback from the listeners which requires the educator to understand the students' language. The professors told us that in literacy education, Freire emphasized the importance of relating new words to the student's existing realities and respecting their lived experiences. One method the institute uses to connect to the peoples' lives is the utilization of television and radio to promote cultural action.

The professors gave us an overview of Freire's life as well as his influence on education. In 1962, Paulo was appointed Brazil's Secretary of Education. He implemented a new slogan at that time: "With your feet on the ground, you can still learn." This movement was designed to reach children who could not afford shoes. At that time, a child could not attend school without shoes. Unfortunately, in 1964, a military coup ended Freire's educational movement just before his new slogan was to be adopted: "With your feet on the ground, you can also get a job."

Dr. Rosas told us a personal story of his relationship with Freire. Their friendship began in the 1950s. They remained in constant contact until several days before Freire died. Freire spent the first 40 years of his life in Recife. When Freire was a young child, his family became poverty stricken after an economic depression in Brazil. He taught himself how to read and write using sticks in the dirt under a mango tree. He was eager to keep studying after he learned the basics, but his family lacked the resources. His mom convinced a teacher to let him attend school tuition free. Ironically, the teacher was Dr. Aluisio Araujo, the father of Freire's second wife, Nita, who he married years later (Macedo, 2001). Freire then taught Portuguese, which helped him develop a strong background in language and grammar.

Elsa Freire was Freire's first wife. She also taught literacy courses, but did not write any books or articles, which is why she is not as well known. Freire mentions Elsa in many of his books, and Elsa discussed many of Freire's ideas with her own students. According to Dr. Rosas, Elsa was the "rock" of the family. Dr. Rosas added, "Paulo also graduated from law school. After his first client, he decided never to practice law again." Apparently, he was

disenchanted with the injustices of the legal system and the heartache of clients and could not fathom spending his life as a lawyer.

Freire spent time in prison in the 1960s after the military coup. The Brazilian military viewed him as dangerous because he empowered the people. Freire did not impose what people were supposed to know; he encouraged them to think for themselves. The military leaders feared Freire's philosophy of education would threaten their power. Freire was in exile for 16 years. However, he never gave up, and he viewed all life experiences as growth opportunities. He valued different knowledge, not just academic knowledge, and talked about his time in prison as a valuable learning experience that enabled him to empathize with those imprisoned. He returned to Brazil in 1980 as Brazil's Secretary of Education.

According to Dr. Rosas, only 100 copies were printed of Freire's first book titled *Education and Brazilian Reality*. Freire had given a signed copy to Dr. Rosas. When Freire returned from exile, he asked Dr. Rosas if he had a copy of the book because he had given his last copy away. Dr. Rosas told Freire he would provide a Xerox copy, but "no way was he going to give up his signed copy!" We all laughed!

Dr. Alcides Tedesco stated that Freire would have thoroughly enjoyed that professors from the third and first worlds were meeting to discuss popular education. He also said that Freire and Dom. Helder Caurara, a priest, were the two most important spreaders of literacy education and referred to them as modern saints. He continued, claiming that 30 institutions have collaborated to adopt Freire's ideas, yet each program has the freedom to adapt his ideas to meet the needs of their respective communities.

Professor Rosa Godoy at the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba gave a lecture on the historical formation of Northeastern Brazil. She began with a discussion on Brazil's export economy, large landmass, and African slavery. The historical similarities to the United States were startling. The realization that White supremacy seemed to be truly a global issue was disheartening. The reality that hegemony in Brazil has continued to widen the gap between the rich and the poor indicated to me that this concept of intentionally developing policies that preserve and enhance the wealth and power of the privileged is a global issue.

Dr. Ireland, also from the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba, argued that as a result of previously failed attempts, he is cautiously optimistic at the prospects of improving literacy. Some believe they have failed because the literacy campaign was developed and implemented by the political left, or liberal thinkers. The people on the political right, or conservative thinkers, wanted these programs to fail because they feared that when the illiterate became literate, they would vote for candidates on the left. This supports my argument that many in power do not want the masses to become critically literate. The hegemonic practice of rejecting educational policy that encourages critical literacy in Brazil is a form of oppression, just as denying poor children a quality education in the United States is a form of oppression.

At the Universidade de Bahia in Salvador, Professor Wilson Mattos described another form of hegemony and oppression in Brazil. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Africans and Afro-Brazilians began to form "cantos," which were groups who gathered to offer services and support for each other; it was an intercultural effort designed to move Africans away from slavery toward freedom. The cantos attempted to dispel the myth that Africans and Afro-Brazilians could not offer services, such as chair making, craft work, brick laying,

carpentry, horse shoe application, plumbing, barbers, small machine operators, fisherman, and boat repair. In addition to teaching slaves new skills, the cantos were also responsible for retaining values and identities between many African cultures. However, the government made efforts to control the cantos by preventing them from organizing. They implemented three policies to manipulate the effectiveness of the cantos. First, they limited the space for them to gather. Second, they required them to register with the government. Finally, the government mandated the cantos pay taxes. These hegemonic policies resulted in taxes rising to the point that taxation became a practice of exclusion; by the end of the 19th century, they were actually considered prohibition taxes.

Professor Rafael Vieira Filho of the Universidade Estadual da Bahia provided yet another example of hegemony and oppression in Brazil. He discussed the historical significance of Carnival, claiming that Carnival in the 19th century was very different than it is today. What started out as an African cultural experience turned into a commercialized industry for tourism. The Brazilian government wanted to impress the foreigners who visited Carnival and insisted that it become more “civilized.” It evolved from an individual African expression and celebration to a commercialized industry that required specific attire to participate, as well as the imposition of fees to attend Carnival. These hegemonic policies on Carnival discriminated against many Afro-Brazilians who lacked the resources to purchase the outfits and pay the fees to enter the Carnival. Today, only a few cities have authentic Carnivals, Recife being one of them.

At the Universidade Estadual da Bahia in Salvador, we learned about the history of Africans in Bahia, with an emphasis on the aspects of the organization of the working

people's world. Dr. Wilson Mattos began by giving us an overview of his dissertation, which focused on the roots of African culture in Bahia. He explained that two types of slavery emerged in Bahia: slaves that people owned and slaves that people rented. Those who were rented were considered gain slaves and had more autonomy. As a result, they were considered superior to the owned slaves. However, the gain slaves were forced to register as slaves. By 1764, most registered slaves were Afro-Brazilian. The greatest concentration of gain slaves was in commercial regions. However, they infiltrated all neighborhoods, including wealthy ones.

The Brazilian government began dividing Africans into thirteen categories according to skin color. Black people who came from Africa were referred to as Africans; those born in Brazil were referred to as Afro-Brazilian. Language between the groups created problems because most Afro-Brazilians spoke Portuguese, while Africans spoke their tribal language. Currently, Bahia categorizes people as Black (Preta), White (Branco), Asian (Asiatico), Native Indian (Indigena), and Mixed (Parda).

Dr. Maura Penna had a creative way of examining Brazilian culture by analyzing the role of Vatapa, which is a typical dish in the state of Bahia. Vatapa has an African slave origin. Lack of resources resulting from living in poverty forced Africans to find creative ways to feed large amounts of people. Vatapa came to symbolize cultural expression of the people. However, it is not the ingredients that deem its importance, rather it is the process that each culture goes through that makes it significant. Vatapa is alive and changeable; it has also been transformed through technological advances. This extremely spicy dish consists of chicken or fish, coconut milk, shrimp, stale bread, ground peanuts and cashews, and is

seasoned with palm tree oil and spices. It is commonly served at rituals. The ingredients are smashed together, resulting in a creamy food that can feed numerous people.

The last group of slaves from Africa arrived in the first half of the 19th century. In 1935, there was a revolt. Of the 65,000 residents in Salvador, 47,000 were Africans and other Blacks. By the beginning of the 20th century, more than 70% of the state of Bahia was of African descent. Today, a strong presence of African culture remains. This is partly due to the large European migration south to the coffee plantations. By 1950, slavery was abolished. Brazil was the last country in the Americas to end slavery. An understanding of the history of slavery in Brazil helps explain how Salvador developed into what it is today. Dr. Wilson Mattos claimed that racism was and continues to be an enormous problem in Bahia. He argued that Brazil has adopted a European White supremacist belief that everyone who is non-White is inferior and often referred to as uncivilized. Currently, there are a variety of Black movements designed to dispel this myth. However, unlike the legal policies against discrimination in the United States, Brazil has no such laws. Dr. Mattos described White supremacy as embedded in Brazilian culture. Affirmative action is currently being discussed as a possible remedy to discrimination in Brazil.

Internalized racism also exists in Brazil. Dr. Mattos claimed; the darker one's skin color, the more intense the discrimination. I couldn't help but notice that as we moved into the poorer parts of each city, people's skin color was darker, confirming the interconnectedness of racism and classism in Brazil. Dr. Mattos told us the most disadvantaged Brazilian citizens are Black women who live in poverty, who also identify with a same-sex orientation. This mirrors the varying degrees of discrimination in the United States, where a color caste system

exists even within races, and poor people, homosexuals, and women are often dehumanized and oppressed.

Fortunately, the professors who spoke with us about problems of race and class seemed to be actively dialoguing about them at the university level, which may result in widespread critical awareness of the negative consequences of hegemony, discrimination, and oppression in Brazil. However, it seemed that Brazil was lacking a middle class. It appeared people were either rich or poor, and it was not uncommon to see a beautiful house right next door to a shanty. It surprised me that there wasn't an organized resistance to the disparity in wealth distribution, but I imagine, as in the United States, the marginalized lacked the resources to organize.

Freire clearly recognized that disparities in wealth contributed to the suffering of many Brazilians, which is why he devoted his life to helping the peasants understand their oppression through critical literacy programs. Professor Timothy Ireland spoke about literacy rates as well as the impact of illiteracy on Brazilians living in poverty. The northeast portion of Brazil is the most underdeveloped region in the country. Poor living conditions and lack of access to schooling is widespread. Adult illiteracy rates are at 12-15%. Dr. Ireland explained that the current Brazilian government has made literacy a top priority. In fact, the president at that time pledged to eradicate illiteracy in four to five years. Unfortunately, previous literacy campaigns have failed, and as a result, pessimism regarding the current administration's literacy goals is prevalent among higher education faculties.

At the Universidade Federal Da Paraiba, Dr. Maria Eulina Pessoa de Carvalho gave a lecture titled "Gender Awareness in School: Problematizing the Curriculum and Pedagogical

Practice.” She confirmed my initial observation that more women are in school than men. Women also have higher graduation rates, score higher on exams, and earn better grades. However, men tend to hold more prestigious positions. Once again, I was able to draw parallels between the women in the United States and the women in Brazil. Dr. Eulina claimed Brazilians did not seem concerned about gender issues, and that she has spent many years trying to convince them that sexism is a problem.

Sandra Azevedo taught us about her feminist organization devoted to enhancing self-esteem in women. She began with a brief history of the women’s movement, stating that in the 1980s, there was a cultural revolution. Brazilian women fought for political space in education, which resulted in a transformation of living conditions for women. In the 1990s, women played an important role in Brazilian policy development and implementation. They became landowners. There was also a variety show called Programa Mulher em Asao that broadcasted to 21 counties and was designed to empower women. Ms. Azevedo’s nonprofit organization, Cunha Astelizabel Sousa (Women in Action), incorporates three strategies to empower women: providing education, raising self-esteem, and stimulating community organization to fight for women’s rights.

Women who are active in this movement are socially at risk, as it is not popular to be a feminist in Brazil. The Cunha Astelizabel Sousa organization also fights for women’s reproductive rights, including providing access to abortion services, but the country often does not support abortion rights. It took five years after reproductive rights laws were passed to begin implementing these laws. The organization’s pedagogical approach to abortion is to treat it as a social issue, not a religious one. Doctors, lawyers, and other professional women’s

groups try to build alliances to ensure the health system offers abortion services to all women. Unfortunately, abortion rates are under reported. In addition, one in five women who go to the hospital is seeking a dilation and curettage after inducing abortion at home.

Cunha Estelizabeth Sousa also spoke with us about women's rights in Brazil. She began a campaign to encourage men to take responsibility in reproduction and the prevention of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The motto of the campaign is "Nobody gets pregnant by herself." Two related issues of concern for woman are poverty and domestic violence. Ms. Sousa argued that both of these issues must be an integral part of the woman's movement if the objectives are to be met. She concluded by stating that women have a right to pleasure, a right to decide about issues concerning their bodies, and a right to equal opportunities in education and work.

A few days later, we went to lunch at Sagarana Restaurant, and Sandra Azevedo from the Cunha Feminist group joined us. We talked about Brazilian women and sexually transmitted diseases, violence, and discrimination. The similarities between the countries were startling. Brazil seemed a few decades behind the United States with their woman's movement, but they certainly struggle with similar issues. We again addressed the focus on helping women raise their levels of self-esteem as an empowerment tool for preventing domestic violence, as well as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

In 2003, Brazil had 500,000 confirmed cases of HIV; however, the estimate was around two million. Intravenous drug use in cities contributed to 50% of all new HIV cases. The government claimed they were prepared to do massive HIV testing, but the health professionals were concerned, claiming they could barely handle the cases they had. The

World Bank offered to fund HIV treatment, education, and prevention, but a country must have accurate data. Brazil lacked the resources for massive testing, which made it difficult to utilize the World Bank's offer.

We visited a nongovernmental organization called Amazona, which was founded in 1996. The initial emphasis was on preventing and treating HIV infection in sex workers, but has branched out to target all citizens. Amazona is a grassroots effort to prevent the spread of HIV. The organization has volunteers in various communities who work in pairs, walking the neighborhoods, educating people. The organization emphasizes social justice, health as a basic right, and gender relations. Amazona strives for a culture of peace, incorporating a mindset of nonviolence. Their educational mission involves three steps: creating a partnership with someone in the community, educating them on prevention of HIV, and forming groups that meet and report progress in the community.

After visiting the Amazona Center, we drove to one of their community projects called Kids Talk, which is a radio station that broadcasts daily, striving to create HIV awareness. The signal was not transmitted through personal radios; rather, it was broadcasted throughout the community from speakers placed at the top of poles. We were told that the radio disc jockey had prepared a series of questions for us, and the group elected me to serve as interviewee. This experience was a highlight of my trip! The interview lasted about 25 minutes and was broadcast live to about 3,000 community members. I was asked about everything from what I did professionally to how I felt about Brazil. He wanted to know why I had chosen HIV as an area of expertise, and I told him the story of my uncle being diagnosed HIV positive in 1985, and that I had devoted my life to being a part of the solution

to the pandemic because of that connection. The group was incredibly supportive and gave me numerous compliments afterward. I will never forget that experience!

In each city we visited, it was clear that music and dance were a major part of Brazilian culture. The upbeat energy of the music and dance in Brazil was contagious. It was almost impossible not to tap your feet. In Joao Pessoa, we visited a community called Porto do Campin where we were met by local students who performed a dance for us. It was truly inspirational watching the joy on the kids' faces as they danced together, spinning and moving in unison. All of the girls were dressed in gorgeous, colorful, and elaborate full-length dresses that flared wide at the bottom. The girls held the bottoms of the dresses out as they spun, providing a spectacular sight. The students invited us to dance with them. Most of the group participated. I danced and danced until I was drenched in sweat. After their performance, a couple of the girls tried to teach me a very complicated dance move in front of the huge crowd. I thought I had made a complete fool out of myself, but the rest of the group assured me that I danced well; I imagine it was because they were relieved they didn't have to learn the dance.

Another evening in Joao Pessoa, seven of us ventured to a local dance club called The Association of Musicians. The place was packed with local residents; we were the only foreigners there. The live music was upbeat and joyous once again. People danced and laughed. It became apparent that many Brazilians express and celebrate life through music and dance. At the end of the evening, the band invited the seven of us on stage to thank us for visiting the club. This evening was another highlight of my trip.

In Salvador, we went to the Capoeira and Candomble Show at Solar do Uniao, which was a former slave receiving station. It was located right by the ocean. Our delicious feast was followed by an amazing dance show with acrobatic tumbling to the beat of African drums. The dancers defied gravity with their front and back tucks, cartwheels, and hand stands! The beats were fast. The energy was intense. After the main event, the dancers invited us on stage to dance with them. And boy did we boogie! We laughed and danced until we were drenched with sweat again. It was a wonderful experience. I started getting used to being invited on stage during music and dance performances. I think it was the performers' way of thanking us for coming to their shows. Brazilians seem warm, loving, and open to foreigners; it was so refreshing.

During one of lectures at the Univeridade Federal Da Paraiba, Dr. Penna showed us Brazilian music videos. The genres and style were quite similar to videos in the United States and included rap, reggae, rock and roll, and African Pop. The music videos were creative, inspirational, and technologically sophisticated. Music plays a profound role in my personal and professional life, and I argue it is a powerful pedagogical tool that is underutilized by educators in the United States. Experiencing the importance of music and dance in Brazilian culture and education reinforced my belief in the power of music in education.

I had mixed feelings about leaving Brazil. I had a transformational experience participating in the study abroad trip. I learned more about Freire and adult education than I could have imagined. I didn't want to leave for I feared I would never be able to come back. However, I really missed my kids. It was a long, slow trip home, but it provided ample opportunity for me to reflect on my experiences. I was excited to get back to my coursework

and learn more about Paulo Freire. His ideas of empowering people through critical education seemed so revolutionary. I really wanted to figure out how to implement Freire's ideas in my own classroom, and I knew I had much research to do if I was going to achieve this goal.

One of the most profound lessons I learned was that the United States and Brazil have similar histories and struggles. European colonization of both countries was accompanied with hegemonic policies that caused great economic disparities. The importation of African slaves resulted in racism and the oppression of Blacks that continues to this day. However, it is not just Blacks who are oppressed in both countries; the prevailing White supremacist value structure can dehumanize and harm all non-Whites. In addition, more woman are attending colleges and universities, yet women still get paid less than men and hold less prestigious jobs. Disparities in HIV diagnosis and treatment are social justice issues in Brazil and the United States, as HIV disproportionately impacts the poor and people of color in both countries.

As a result of immersing myself in Brazilian education and culture, and the subsequent realization that Brazil and the U.S. have many similarities, I became convinced that I could implement Freire's ideas in the United States. I knew that Freire was a controversial academic in both countries, but his work made sense to me, and I was willing to take on this pedagogical challenge. Little did I know that I would spend the next eight years researching, presenting, and incorporating Freire's ideas in my social justice classroom. This has not been an easy undertaking, as my implementation has been met with some resistance. However, I continue learning, reflecting, and adapting Freire's work as political, social, and economic climates change in the United States.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE NEED FOR A PEDAGOGICAL LANGUAGE OF HOPE

“Changing language is part of the process of changing the world.”
Paulo Freire (1994, p. 56)

In his book *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994), Paulo Freire presents his readers with an understanding of hope which is neither static nor solely emotional. In his writings, hope is an active force which is imperative to the success of “problem-posing education” where the curriculum is learner centered, the relevance of the material is stressed, and the teacher is no longer the “one-who-teaches,” rather is the one who is taught in dialogue with students (Freire, 1970). Conversely, hopelessness is a “concrete entity” (Freire, 1994, p. 8) created by economic, historical, and social forces of oppression and is intensified in the absence of a “critical knowledge of reality” (Freire, 1994, p. 30). Giroux (2002) writes, “Educators, scholars, and policy makers can make an important contribution politically and pedagogically in the current crisis in revitalizing a language of resistance and possibility” (p. 1157). Using Freire’s ideas as a foundation, social justice educators can develop their own language of resistance and hope to inspire their students to seek solutions to social, economic, and political inequalities currently found in the United States.

Freire (1994) claimed all social movements begin with hope: "Alone, [hope] does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly" (p. 8). In order to be fully human, one must feel hope accompanied with a belief that a more just world is possible. Freire (1994) continued, "Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair" (p. 3). Freire spoke of hopelessness as "a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it" (Freire, 1970, p. 91). He viewed hope as rooted in humanity's incompleteness and a necessary element of authentic liberation. Freire (1994) reflected on his work helping the oppressed find hope:

I still have in my memory today, as fresh as ever, snatches of discourses by peasants and expressions of their legitimate desires for betterment of their world, for a finer, less-ugly world, a world whose "edges" would be less "rough," in which it would be possible to love – Guevara's dream, too. (p. 31)

Students of higher education, particularly those from traditionally marginalized groups, indicate that they feel systematically cast off or forgotten, which parallels the experiences of the peasants that Freire worked with. Freire encouraged educators and students to find hope and argued that without hope, they are likely to accept current injustices.

Ireland (1994) writes of Freire: "His message is fundamentally one of hope, hope which is maintained alive by a constant process of struggle in which men and women seek to liberate themselves from the oppression and ignorance which restrict their true ontological vocation" (p. 199). Progressive educators convey to students that hope helps us to "understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it" (Freire, 1994, p. 8). Hope, then, inspiring and inspired by understanding is, as Freire states, an ontological need, essential to

both our being and knowing, integral to both epistemology and ontology. According to Freire (1994):

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope, there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless or despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal. (p. 3)

Freire (1994) claimed hope must be combined with reflection and action: “As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain” (p. 2). In other words, hope is imperative, yet in isolation, it is insufficient.

My childhood experiences of struggling with poverty and abandonment have given me a unique ability to empathize with students who have also struggled. As an educator who has broken the cycle of poverty in my family, I feel a personal connection with many of Freire’s ideas on education for liberation. However, it was not just the process of getting a higher education alone that freed me from poverty; my educational quests were always driven by hope that a more just world was possible. Giroux (2002) writes:

Hope, in this instance, is the precondition for individual and social struggle, the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites, the mark of courage on the part of intellectuals in and out of the academy who use the resources of theory to address pressing social problems. (p. 1157)

I conducted this research from an educator activist perspective fueled by hope for a more just society and through the lens of critical theory, which serves as my conceptual framework.

Critical theorists call for action to counter the hegemonic forces that lead to oppression, and we encourage educators to embrace and implement a classroom pedagogy of liberation.

I want to articulate Freire's alternative language that transcends the antidialogical nature of traditional higher education. Jackson (1997) argues, "Through claiming or reclaiming language, people can critically engage in an analysis of their experiences which enables them to transform and create the world" (p. 463). My objective is to seek educational forms to counteract growing economic and social disparities that affect not only those already in poverty but growing segments of the population not affected before by economic disparities. Giroux (1985) claims, "Language, in this case, is intimately related to power and functions to both position and constitute the way that teachers and students define, mediate, and understand their relation to each other and the larger society" (p.34). Freire urged educators to confront power structures within education and society by developing a language of resistance.

Addressing injustices requires a shift in our educational language as well as an emphasis on critical thinking and liberatory education. Giroux (2002) continues, "Americans need new theoretical tools – a new language – for linking hope, democracy, education, and the demands of a more fully realized democracy" (p. 1156). I encourage educators to resist traditional constraints placed upon them by learning a new language and vocabulary for their classroom pedagogy that helps disclose injustices and enables them to facilitate dialogue that encourages students to find remedies and take action on these perceived injustices. I urge educators to adopt Freire's language of hope and come together in our quest to make this world "more round, less ugly, and more just" (Macedo, 1970, p. 26). In broad terms, this is what I call a "pedagogical language of hope."

An Aspiring Freireian Educator

I consider myself an aspiring Freireian scholar and educator. His pedagogical language of hope has given me theory and language to help articulate and validate my nontraditional, anti-hegemonic teaching philosophy. Empowering students to critically think is the foundation of my educational philosophy. Freire's ideas of using dialogue to promote critical consciousness, providing opportunities to reflect and connect the material to students' lived experiences, and encouraging action are fundamental elements of my pedagogy. As a class, we work together, not only when identifying problems, but also when searching for remedies to the problems. Shor & Freire (1987) write, "In a problem-posing participatory format, the teacher and students transform learning into a collaborative process to illuminate and act on reality" (p. 11). I attempt to create a learning community in each class I teach. Through the dialectical process, I learn a tremendous amount from my students, and many have indicated that they learn from each other, both from the content they present as well as from the stories of their lived experiences.

Each year that I teach, I believe I understand Freire's life and work better and, in turn, articulate and implement his ideas more successfully in my classroom. Freire urged educators to adapt his ideas to meet the needs of individual learning communities, omitting inapplicable ideas and embracing those most relevant. In other words, Freire did not intend for all aspects of his work to be applicable to every educational endeavor. It is not a defined recipe of liberatory pedagogy; each situation is different. Content and curricular choices change as students' lived experiences, political climate, hot topics, and popular culture change. Freire's

work provided me with valuable ideas for teaching that are consistent with my social justice mission, including using education to create critical consciousness, encouraging reflection and action, and promoting social and political change.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to articulate concepts derived from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) that are relevant to a social justice classroom. The intent is to identify some of Freire's core ideas and theories in a manner that can be applied by teachers interested in advancing the aims of education for social change. Darder (2002) supports the need for incorporating Freire's pedagogical ideas in the United States. As a result of:

economic inequality and racialized injustice in contemporary society, teachers must become more cognizant of the alienating conditions faced by poor ethnic communities – conditions that are indelibly linked to historical events that position members of subordinate populations very differently from members of the ruling class. (p.7)

The hegemonic policies in the United States regarding taxation, banking and investments, criminal justice, incarceration, immigration, national defense, health care, and education are all examples of political decisions that have benefitted the wealthy at the expense of the marginalized, particularly the poor and non-Whites. Duncan-Andrade (2009) writes, “people of color trail their White counterparts on virtually every indicator of social, political, and economic well-being” (p. 183). Currently, 47 million people live below the poverty line, one in four children show up to school hungry, the poor are being incarcerated at rates far higher than the well-off (Reiman & Leighton, 2009), millions of Americans are without access to

affordable health insurance (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2009), nearly two trillion dollars have been spent and thousands of lives lost in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and huge disparities exist in the quality of education between poor school districts and well-off districts (Kozol, 2005). Yet, the top 10% of the population now enjoys over 66% of the wealth, and the gap continues to widen (Wolf, 2010). From 2007-2009, the top quintile, or wealthiest 20% of Americans, enjoyed a 2.2% increase in wealth and currently control 87.2% of overall wealth in the United States. The remaining four quintiles, or bottom 80% of Americans, suffered a 2.2% decrease in wealth, and currently control only 12.8% of overall wealth in the United States. Finally, “The wealthiest 1% of U.S. households had a net worth that was 225 times greater than the median or typical household’s net worth in 2009” (Allegretto, 2011, p. 2). The current disparities in wealth distribution reveal the widest gap in wealth ever recorded in United States history (Allegretto, 2011).

An in-depth analysis of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) can enable educators to develop an understanding of oppression, as well as articulate an educational vision driven by hope that creates a new language in North American higher education. The objective is to move society in a more civil and just direction, with less suffering and more hopefulness. Drawing on the works of Paulo Freire, this inquiry provides a critical analysis of hegemonic practices that are dominant in today’s system of higher education and in society. Macedo (2000) argues,

What we have in place in the United States is not a system that encourages independent thought and critical thinking. On the contrary, our so-called democratic schools are based on an instrumental skills-banking approach that often prevents the development of the kind of thinking that enables one to ‘read the world’ critically and

to understand the reasons and linkages behind facts. (preface in Chomsky, 2000b, pp. 3-4)

Our current emphasis on test taking as the main evaluation and accountability tool in schools neglects the whole student, turning them into objects of, rather than participants in, our society. In an incredible move away from her support of No Child Left Behind (2001), the infamous education legislation of the George W. Bush era, Ravitch (2010) claims,

The schools will surely be failures if students graduate knowing how to choose the right option from four bubbles on a multiple-choice test, but unprepared to lead fulfilling lives, to be responsible citizens, and to make good choices for themselves, their families, and our society. (p. 224)

The lack of critical thinking in North American pedagogy denies the interconnectedness of human life and ignores the potential of students to participate in their social, political, and emotional world by failing to validate the importance of students' lived experiences as instrumental in their understanding of the world. Furthermore, Gordon (2009) writes, "Such test driven instruction results in a pedagogy that is based on drill and memorization, sacrifices a broad and more complex curriculum, and contributes to the estrangement of many students from learning" (p.44). The result of test-driven accountability in education has turned our students into commodities disinterested and disengaged in the learning process.

In the past three decades, the idea that schools function to promote the public good has been replaced with the idea that schools should function to promote corporate interests (Ravitch, 2010). The neoliberal educational movement that inserts free-market philosophies into education is undermining the very fabric of our aspiring democracy (Kincheloe, 1999). Torres and Reyes (2011) support this argument: "The neoliberal turn of education converts public schools and universities, including research activities into business-like institutions,

subservient to corporations. Consequently, market values override the education values of human fulfillment and democratic strengthening” (p. 11). The rapid rate of the dehumanization of students and workers in the United States over the past decade requires prompt social justice activism.

Noguera and Fine (2011) argue the neoliberal trend in education “favors a market model for public schools that would abandon America’s historic commitment to providing education to all children as a civil right” (p.6). The move to embrace market values in education threatens to undermine attempts at providing access to quality education for all people living in the United States. Ravitch (2010) continues, “Our schools will not improve if we entrust them to the magical powers of the market. Markets have winners and losers” (p. 227). Noguera (2009) states simply that the neoliberal shift has resulted in “the triumph of the market over human values” (p. ix).

This radical change in the purpose of education should have all educators alarmed and hopefully motivated to challenge and change this philosophical shift. Torres (2011) continues, “Progressives are awakening to the open and not-so-open advances of the right wing neoliberalism – faith in the market as the best organizing principle of government and society” (p. 162). When students are viewed as commodities, potential profits, and not human beings, they are dehumanized, which often leads to the marginalization and oppression of students. Fine (2012) poses:

Whether we consider the banning of books in the Tucson, Arizona public schools or the surveillance of immigrant students in Alabama, the denial of financial aid to undocumented students or some with felony convictions on their record, or the closing of “failing” schools, and progressive universities, we must name this moment in history as one in which the right to education is being fundamentally undermined by

an uneven admixture of corporate, xenophobic, anti-union, and profoundly antidemocratic factions. (p. 145)

In fact, I argue that we do not live in an authentic democracy. Huffington (2003) writes, “No public interest group is able to match the relentless lobbying and contributing by corporate heavy hitters. And until we have such a populist countervailing force, we are doomed to live in a less and less democratic society” (p. 21). J. Perkins (2004, 2007) and Chomsky (2000a, 2003) also support my argument of our failing system, “Democracy in the world and in the United States, in particular, has become merely rhetoric. When the ruling class acts in cahoots with corporate power and the government, they become obnoxious, blatantly dictatorial, and shameless corporatocrats” (Torres & Reyes, 2011, p. 66). Kincheloe (2006) writes, “Democracy is a valuable concept only to the point that it does not interfere with capitalism, the interests of profit, and the aesthetics of the commodity form” (p. xiii). Finally, Macedo (2006) argues, “We are concerned with democracy as long as it benefits our capitalistic interests” (p. 51).

The result of the neoliberal shift toward market-driven education and other social services is an increased concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the elite, less academic freedom to meet the needs of individual school communities, and a factory-like educational system that reproduces workers for those already enjoying economic and social power. In his last conversation with Paulo Freire in April of 1997, Carlos Alberto Torres (2009) writes that just before the cell phone disconnected, Freire said, “Carlos, we have to criticize neoliberalism. It’s the new demon of the world today” (p. 2). Within days, Paulo Freire had died.

Freire argued that education is often designed to maintain the status quo of the dominant class. Souto-Manning and Smagorinsky (2010) support Freire's claim, "U.S. schools tend to validate and perpetuate the values of middle-class Whites" (p. 47). The result is devastating poor communities and communities of color. Miller and Kirkland (2010) assert, "Non-White and White students from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds experience lower standardized test scores, teacher expectations, and access to resources than their middle-class White counterparts" (pp. 5-6). No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) relies on standardized test scores when determining if a school is failing, and the results are directly tied to school funding and school closures. Steinberg (2006) writes, "NCLB takes from those that need money the most" (p. 220). NCLB has devastated poor and non-White communities as they struggled to meet the demands of NCLB with far fewer resources than middle-class communities and schools. Freire urged teachers to counter the resulting injustices of a pedagogy focused on dominant groups by implementing a pedagogy that empowers all students, regardless of race, sex, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

Inequalities in education have led to wide-spread achievement gaps between the dominant culture and non-dominant cultures throughout the United States. Brown (2005) argues, "The evidence is clear that various segments of our public school population experiences negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis" (p. 155). Lack of access to quality education for large segments of poor and non-White communities is a major crisis that threatens to undermine attempts to create a democratic society. Furthermore, Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera (2005) argue:

The failure of so many urban school districts to prepare young people academically, the absence of early-childhood education, and the removal of after-school opportunities have combined with a growing fear of crime to shape a national consciousness that is complacent to the injustices that negatively affect urban communities and the youth who live in them. (p. 24)

Educational policies in the United States have increasingly moved toward using punitive measures to control and contain students. Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera (2005) continue, “If U.S. society continues to treat youth – particularly young people of color – as potential criminals and undermines their contributions to social justice, then democracy, freedom, and fairness will only be wishful ideals in times of increasing disparity and despair” (p. 25). However, I argue that the current trends in hegemonic policies in the United States that have led to increased disparities in wealth and educational opportunities will soon include middle-class Whites as a group oppressed by the powerful if radical changes in education, economic, and social policies aimed at helping all Americans are not implemented immediately.

As a result of social injustice in education and society, a major paradigm shift in North American higher education is urgently needed. Darder (2002) writes, “Revolutionary pedagogy discards the uncritical acceptance of the prevailing social order and its structures of capitalistic exploitation, and embraces the empowerment of dispossessed populations as the primary purpose of schooling” (p. 57). Encouraging educators to embrace a humanist educational philosophy that is student centered and holistic, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and social action, and presenting Freire’s liberatory pedagogy to facilitate student transformation and social change all have the potential to combat inequality and injustice in the United States and are objectives in writing this dissertation.

Research Questions

In this dissertation, I address the following research questions:

1. How have my experiences with Freireian pedagogy infused my educational practices as an instructor of higher education students?
2. How do my undergraduate college students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire's concepts?
3. How can an analysis of student resistance to my implementation of Freire's ideas and theories help me develop a more inclusive pedagogy?
4. What can be learned from a dialogue with another self-identified Freireian educator of undergraduate students?

Methodology: Autoethnography

This dissertation is an autoethnographic qualitative study of my quest to find meaning in my personal and professional life, as well as in my life experiences as a social justice educator. Implementing Freire's ideas can be challenging, and I have experienced success and struggle incorporating his ideas in my own classroom pedagogy. I want to understand why I connect with most students, but anger others. Autoethnography involves a personal narrative through the lens of the researcher. As in Jaya's (2011) *Themes of Identity: An Autoethnographical Exploration*, my autoethnography is deeply connected to reflective autobiography, as I am analyzing my own practice. Reflecting on my implementation of Freire's pedagogical ideas and writing a personal narrative of my experiences is a research

method conducive to helping me understand my pedagogy, improve my pedagogy, and help others understand Freire's ideas and theories.

Jones (2008) writes that autoethnography "creates charged moments of clarity, connection, and change" (p. 207). Writing an autoethnography provides an opportunity for me to articulate my educational philosophy, compare my practice to other educators who have been impacted by Freire's writings, and analyze students' perceptions of my implementation of Freireian pedagogy through a personal narrative and reflection on my interpretation and implementation of Freire's work. This study may help me understand my strengths and weaknesses as an educator and help me improve my practice.

I have devoted my life to inspiring future and current teachers, as well as educating others from non-education disciplines of the power of education as an agent for change. Ayers (2004) writes, "It is through our narratives that we develop and negotiate an identity" (p. viii).

For this undertaking to work, I continuously reflect on my own pedagogy and philosophy.

Welty (1983) supports this effort:

Writing a story... is one way of discovering sequence and experience, of stumbling upon cause and effect in the happenings of a writer's own life... connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together... And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect. (p. 90)

Writing an autoethnography provides opportunities for spiritual, mental, and emotional growth. It is a method that enables researchers to reflect, articulate, and analyze their personal and professional lives. As a social justice educator, I occasionally feel as though my mission for a just society is up against powerful forces that seem unbeatable, forces that do not want

critically aware citizens that question hegemonic policies and practices. I sometimes ask myself, “Why am I fighting for justice?” As one of my dear friends and social justice colleagues said, “Social justice education is exhausting!” Reflecting on my life as an educator provides an opportunity for me to find a “new mountain of meaning” (Welty, 1983, p. 90) in my struggles for social justice and, most importantly, may unveil hope that my efforts over the past ten years to transform society through education are worth the effort, as exhausting as social justice education is at times.

This autoethnographic study may inspire other educators to incorporate Freire’s language and ideas into their own pedagogy. I want to provide support for social justice educators and let them know that they are not alone in their activist missions. Quinn (2008) asserts, “It is my hope that teachers will recognize themselves in my story, as well as the stories of other education activists” (p. 23). This study may encourage educators to embrace and take action on their desires to change the current educational system; it may provide them with a pedagogical language to help them write their own stories.

Theoretical Framework

Critical theory serves as the theoretical framework for the study. In its inception, critical theory sought “to give social agents a critical purchase on what is normally taken for granted and that promotes the development of a free and self-determining society by dispelling the illusions of ideology” (Macey, 2000, p. 75). German philosopher Jurgen Habermas is contemporary critical theory’s best known intellectual voice. Habermas’s addition to the critical theory literature base includes what he called emancipatory knowledge,

which McLaren (2003) describes as helping “us understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege. It also aims at creating the conditions under which irrationality, domination, and oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative, collective action” (p. 197). Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) write:

A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class and gender ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. (p. 281)

Critical theory can shed light on how education can be used to bring about social, political, and economic changes in society. It is research for the common good. Drawing from Ayers (2006), Torres and Reyes (2011) write, “Research for the public interest addresses issues of social justice by building resistance against inequalities, oppression, and dehumanization and by challenging orthodox elitist or supremacist thinking by seeing other human beings more fairly and fully” (p. 77-78). Consistent with Freire’s rejection of neutrality, critical theory is explicitly political. McLaren (2003) continues, “The critical educator doesn’t believe that there are two sides to every question, with both sides needing equal attention. For the critical educator, there are many sides to a problem, and often these sides are linked to certain class, race, and gender interest” (p. 194). Freire’s emphasis on dialogue as an educational tool provides opportunities for students to voice their opinions. The successful critical educator emphasizes the value of multiple perspectives, shattering the oppressive notion that there exist only two schools of thought on an issue.

Though activist by nature, critical theory does not involve the imposition of one's views on another; it involves creating an environment for students to formulate their own views of the world. According to McLaren (2003),

The dialectical nature of critical theory enables the educational researcher to see the school not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialization or a site of instruction, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation. (p. 194)

Such empowerment and transformation are possible when educators help students develop their own language to counter the language of the oppressor, what Freire calls "counter-hegemonic" language. Giroux and McLaren (1992) support the development of a critical pedagogical language that helps students and educators make sense of their experiences.

Promoting social justice education must begin with theory; however, theory alone is not enough. Critical theory transcends the boundaries of traditional theory in that it includes practice. This is consistent with Freire's concept of praxis: reflection followed by action or linking of thought and action (Boshier, 1999). Freire believed theory alone was insufficient when seeking societal change. Goldstein (2007) states, "Quite literally, those of us who engage in critical and liberatory educational praxis must practice what we preach, in the classroom and in our daily lives" (p. 27). As a social justice educator, I model critical pedagogy in my classroom. I support and implement Duncan-Andrade's (2007) description of critical pedagogy, which involves providing opportunities for students to engage in a "critique of structural inequality and oppression, critical reading of the world and their world, and

individual and collective agency for social change” (p. 619). By making efforts to embed critical theory into my practice, I stay consistent to the call to practice what I teach.

Quinn (2008) states, “There is nothing like experience to confirm what theory espouses” (p. 9). Writing a story about my experiences of using Freire’s ideas to educate for social change is consistent with critical theory’s emphasis on the importance of using theory to engage in social action that focuses on alleviating injustices. Torres (2011) supports this notion claiming that, “Lifting the line between ‘research’ and political action is not only necessary but urgent to embrace by education researchers committed to social justice and strengthening democracy” (p. 152).

An autoethnographic study of my implementation of Freire’s ideas aligns well with critical theory and critical pedagogy. Mayo (2001) writes, “Genuine critical pedagogy involves an ongoing struggle of reflecting on oneself, on the social collectivity involved and on the pedagogical practice” (p. 386). My journey as a social justice educator continues to evolve, as I actively seek educational solutions to the problems the human race faces. Brookfield (2005) claims “Critical theory and its contemporary educational applications such as critical pedagogy are grounded in an activist desire to fight oppression, injustice, and bigotry and create a fairer, more compassionate world” (p. 10); Brookfield describes who I am as a researcher and educator. Critical theory is “about possibility, and hope, and change” (Hinchey, 1998, p. 15). Through the lens of critical theory, this inquiry into how I understand and implement Freire’s liberatory pedagogy presented in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) is the focus of this dissertation.

Research Challenges

Specific limitations of autoethnographic research are described in Chapter III.

However, there are general challenges that need to be considered when determining the relevance of this autoethnographic study. Validity, trustworthiness, applicability, authenticity, and neutrality must be seriously considered when discussing rigor of qualitative research (Jaya, 2011). Each challenge will be discussed in this section.

A fundamental concern of research is validity: can the study be validated? Jaya (2011) argues “that by clearly explicating the design and methods, and by stating that from the raw data will emerge sufficient evidence to justify interpretations and by keeping records of all data collection whether they be transcripts or field and personal notes,” a researcher can successfully address the concern of validity (p. 749). In Chapter III, the data collection and data analysis processes are described in detail. All data for this study has been organized in research binders, coded, and themed in a manner that is easily retrievable. Furthermore, the validity of a study is strengthened when supported by theory, a clear description of critical theory as the conceptual framework for the study, as well as Freire’s pedagogical theories as the focus of the study is explicit throughout the dissertation. Finally, Lather (1986) argues that validity in qualitative research can be addressed by constructing “research designs that demand a vigorous self-reflexivity” (p. 271). The reflective nature of autoethnography provides opportunities to follow Lather’s recommendation, and I make all efforts to conduct a vigorous critique of my implementation of Freire’s ideas and theories.

Trustworthiness is strengthened when “multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes” are used (Lather, 1986, p. 270). I address the concern of trustworthiness by including many data collection sources including higher education student reflections and course summaries, interviews, observations, ongoing dialogue and questionnaire with my dialogue partner, my personal journals and field notes, and an extensive literature review of Freireian scholars and practitioners. In an attempt to strengthen trustworthiness and validity, I include a formal teaching evaluation of me by the assistant department chair and an associate professor that was conducted during the same academic year (2010-2011) that the student, personal, and dialogue partner data were collected.

With regard to applicability, this study does have some challenges. I write from the perspective of a social justice educator teaching in a North American university. The focus on Freireian scholars and practitioners, my students, my dialogue partner, and my personal and professional life experiences may limit the applicability of the findings to the general population because the study does not go beyond the participants or higher education. However, regardless of whether teachers identify as social justice educators, those who embody compassion and love in their pedagogy and genuinely care about addressing issues of injustice may find benefits to reading this study. Educators from different disciplines and those who teach in settings other than higher education may enhance their pedagogy by adapting the ideas presented, in part or whole, to meet the needs of their specific learning communities.

Another research concern is authenticity, which questions fairness of different perspectives presented in the study. The inclusion of an analysis of student resistance provides

evidence that viewpoints other than my own are included. However, any personal narrative is incomplete because it is written from the perspective of the researcher and is limited to the researcher's positionality to the subject. This autoethnography is written through my lens as a White, heterosexual single mother in my 40s who was raised in a very nontraditional home, devoid of organized religion and close family ties. Jaya (2011) writes, "No text is universal, as all knowledge is contextual" (p. 749). Clearly, the context of this study is through my perspective, and I acknowledge this challenge to authenticity. I address this concern by supporting my claims with expert testimony, including other academics in my department, my dialogue partner, and scholarly literature, as well as direct quotes from students.

The challenge of neutrality is problematic for any social justice educator, critical theorist, and Freireian educator, as the fundamental belief of educators in these three groups (which are often intertwined, as in my educational philosophy) is that neutrality is a myth. Johnson (2005) writes, "The notion of objectivity in qualitative research has been hotly debated for decades in the social science field, and more recently, many researchers have recognized that complete neutrality is impossible" (p. 96). However, when determining the validity of this study, researcher bias needs to be considered. I conduct this research through the lens of a White, heterosexual, single mother. As a result of my Whiteness, I am positioned in the dominant racial group in the United States. Identifying with a heterosexual orientation also places me in a dominant group. However, as a single mother who was raised in poverty, I identify with non-dominant social positions in our society as well. Belonging to both dominant and non-dominant groups impacts how I interpret my experiences. In many instances, it helps me identify with so many students. However, I also must be aware that my

White privilege creates bias, as well as partial understanding of others, and it changes power relations in my classroom, especially because I am the teacher and ultimately hold power over students. I attempt to be as transparent as possible with my students about my multiple positions within society and the resulting bias it brings to my pedagogy and research.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) argue that researcher bias may occur when insufficient samples are collected or when the data collection process does not occur over a long enough time period. I specifically address this concern by including large samples of data that have been collected over an extended period of time. Bias can also be addressed by including data from atypical samples and extreme cases (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). I include data from typical and atypical classes, as well as data from student resisters from other classes, which I believe are extreme cases of resistance.

The political nature of critical theory may alienate traditional educators who believe in teacher neutrality. This dissertation is not specifically directed at traditional educators who are content with the status quo of education and society in the United States today. It is not intended for teachers who firmly believe in the myths of teacher neutrality and meritocracy, unless their objective is to gain an understanding of social justice education. However, traditional teachers who are interested in seeking alternative ideas and theories on teaching for student and societal transformation may be enlightened to different ways of thinking about their pedagogy as a result of reading this dissertation.

Social Justice Education

Social justice education transcends traditional education in that it focuses on education for liberation and freedom, “working toward classrooms and schools that are antiracist, multicultural/multilingual, and grounded in the experiences of students” (Teachers for Social Justice, 2010). Duncan-Andrade (2007) refers to social justice education as “a set of practices that aim to create equitable social and academic outcomes for students” (p. 618). Educators fighting for social justice typically have their own experiences of economic, social, spiritual, and/or emotional marginalization, which enables them to empathize with others who are struggling. This type of education is not merely a method of teaching; it is a philosophy of life, which stems from a humanistic worldview that all life forms are interconnected, and when one life form suffers, all life forms suffer. The belief is that injustice harms us all, and it is in everyone’s best interest to minimize or eliminate injustice.

Social justice educators are motivated by compassion and love for others. As Cammarota (2009-10) states, we strive for student “empowerment and transformation,” and provide “a space and audience for those voices formerly silenced” (p. 12). Activists by nature, social justice educators strive to transform education and society; the objective is a fairer, more just world, with less suffering and more hopefulness. In the following two sections, I describe aspects of my personal and professional life stories to explain how and why I identify as a social justice educator, which may help the reader understand my commitment to using education as an agent for change.

Personal Background

My childhood experiences, in particular, help frame the reasons I evolved into a social justice educator and continue to embrace my educator activist role, as I am able to empathize, not just sympathize, with others who feel marginalized in society. Although I did not experience the pangs of hunger Freire described from his childhood, I did experience intense feelings of marginalization and abandonment. My perception of poverty and oppression evolved from my own experiences as a White female, growing up in a single-mother home in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s while living below the poverty line.

I was born in Los Angeles, California in 1967 to a single mother. Unfortunately, this type of family is stigmatized by society. I knew early on that my family was looked down upon. My mother struggled to make ends meet and often used welfare to provide basic needs for my brother and me. I remember wearing second-hand clothes. I don't remember ever going to the dentist as a young child, and I only went to the doctor when I was very sick. I attended a different elementary school every year, sometimes two in one year, and had lived in California, Washington, Arizona, and Wyoming by the time I was in the sixth grade.

Needless to say, I knew my home life was very different from most of the other children that I went to school with. As a child, I rarely met other kids who lived without a father, and I never met any kids who were born out of wedlock. My mother has a beautiful spirit, and she loved me greatly as a child. I attribute my capacity to love deeply to my mother; she taught me how to love and helped me believe that I was lovable. My mom raised my brother and me the best she could with the resources she had. Her mother had died when

she was seven years old. Consequently, she did not have motherly support while raising her own children, and I never had a grandma.

Fortunately, I was an optimistic child, and my athletic and academic gifts, as well as my love of life, saved me from being a total outcast. I developed determination and perseverance early on. Though I knew my life was unique, I did not fully realize I was economically and socially disadvantaged until I was around 11 years old. A portion of my family lived in extreme wealth, and watching them indulge in the luxuries of materialism resulted in feelings of intense envy and discontent. At this time in my life, the world did not make sense to me. The economic disparities within my own family, as well as in society as a whole, felt so unjust. During that time, I felt marginalized. I felt less important. I always longed to live in a traditional family, with a dad and economic security. Living in the “unprivileged world” was painful, disheartening, and depressing. I struggled to fit in with my middle- and upper-class counterparts growing up.

Envy can be healthy or unhealthy depending on how one handles the emotion. If envy motivates a person to work hard, it can be a healthy emotion. Unfortunately, as a teenager, envy drove me to thievery. I was angry that I could not have the things the other kids had. Shoplifting seemed to solve many of my feelings of economic inferiority. One day, my friend and I were arrested and put in jail. That was a major turning point in my life. I was 15 years old, and the experience scared me so much that I never shoplifted again. I decided the better route was to work more and go to college.

Early in my high school years, I realized I could break the cycle of poverty if I worked hard enough. I have had little to no parental involvement or supervision since I was 13 years

old, and I have had a job ever since. I always had a roof over my head, but emotional, spiritual, and economic support was mostly absent. There were months when my brother and I lived alone. Many times, I worked more than one job so I could buy clothes and go out with friends. As a teenager, I remember embracing the American Dream. I believed in meritocracy: if I worked hard enough, I could live in the middle class, own a home, have a career, and have children. I was on a mission to provide a life for my kids (not yet born) that I did not have.

I attended four different high schools, as my family life was unpredictable and inconsistent. After high school, I had little support for my undergraduate academic pursuits and was solely responsible for applying and paying for college. I often worked three jobs and survived economically on financial aid in the form of grants and loans. I felt unsupported throughout my undergraduate degree program. During this time of my life, I began to realize that I did not have what Hillary Clinton (1996) describes as “a village.” I felt as though I was on my own, or as I like to say, “Flying solo.” Feelings of abandonment have plagued me my entire life; I often feel as though I was thrown into this world and have had to fend for myself from age 13 on, especially with regard to my social and emotional health.

During the summers of my undergraduate years, I would make a 1,000 mile drive from California to Wyoming and worked as a whitewater rafting guide on the beautiful Snake River outside of Jackson Hole. This is where I met my husband and the father of my two children. As a lover of the outdoors, especially the Rocky Mountains, whitewater rafting was central to my life. I guided on the Snake River for eight years. During that time, I also spent 18 days rafting the Grand Canyon; worked many multiple day trips on the Salmon River in Idaho and the Tuolumne, Kern, American, and Yuba Rivers in California; and rafted the

Upper Gauley and New Rivers in West Virginia. Whitewater rafting gave me a sense of inner peace, and I developed a deep appreciation for the outdoors during this time of my life. It marked the beginning of my spiritual connection with nature. I began viewing all living things as interconnected. I actively sought spiritual clarity by immersing myself in the wilderness. I read and embraced Native American philosophy, including the idea of finding inner peace through connecting with Mother Nature. This time in my life was the most spiritually peaceful time that I can remember. My years spent rafting rivers and in the wilderness provided opportunities for me to reflect on and articulate my purpose in life; I began to understand my yearning to love and be loved.

After I earned my bachelor's degree in 1990, I spent a winter working for the Jackson Hole Ski Resort. I worked at the mid-mountain restaurant and actually had to ski to work! I skied 45 days that winter, many of which were spent skiing alone with my Walkman playing the Eagles, Neil Young, or James Taylor. I was in love with life and deeply pondered my purpose as I skied black diamonds of moguls and powder at high speeds, or twisted and turned through trees, narrowly escaping crashes at times. Skiing was very liberating. In April of 1991, I took a 4,000-mile, six-week solo road trip through Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, California, and Nevada. Spending hours alone driving provided opportunities for personal reflection and clarity. Other than a stop in Phoenix and Los Angeles, I spent most of my trip immersed in the great outdoors. I had my mountain bike, downhill skis, and windsurfer attached to the roof of my car. I then returned to the Snake River for another summer of rafting. Meanwhile, I had decided to move to Illinois to be with my soon-to-be husband, start a family, and pursue a career in teaching.

My spiritual searching during the previous years led me to a profound sense of purpose: I was put on this earth to love and be loved. I planned to actively seek this purpose by becoming a wife, mother, and teacher. I married my husband in 1993. We had our first child in 1996 and our second child in 1998. My children were healthy and beautiful. I was proud to have created them. I tried doing everything I thought would set them up for a happy and productive life: they never went to daycare, they started private preschool at age two, they wore nice clothes, and they had many play dates. We owned a beautiful house, drove nice cars, and vacationed several times a year. I felt I had achieved the American Dream.

My early years of motherhood were a mix of sheer joy, extreme pain, and every emotion in between. Becoming a mother was humbling and exhausting. I was certain it would be natural and easy; after all, it was part of my sense of purpose, right? It was not, and is not, easy. I never imagined I would get divorced, and reflecting on this decision is extremely painful. Nothing could have prepared me for the pain I have endured and continue to endure since the end of my marriage. It has been ten years now, and I can honestly say there were several times I did not think I would survive. Single motherhood proved far more challenging emotionally, spiritually, and financially than I had anticipated, especially because I live thousands of miles from any family members. However, I believe that these struggles have resulted in a deep sense of empathy with my students who have also struggled in single-parent homes. The unintended consequence of simultaneously being the head of my household, teaching overloads every semester, and pursuing a doctoral degree is an increased compassion for others raised in and living difficult lives of loss, pain, and struggle; my experiences have

ultimately enhanced my capacity to be understanding, caring, and loving with my children, students, friends, and colleagues.

Initially after my divorce, I felt on top of the world. I believed I could accomplish anything if I set my mind to it. Professionally, I flourished. I clearly loved teaching and my students loved taking classes with me. I began to build important, lifelong professional friendships and started establishing my reputation of having a unique ability to connect with students. My doctoral coursework helped me build confidence as an educator and expand my pedagogical vocabulary to enable me to articulate my practice. Personally, I developed deep friendships with other graduate students, instructors, and members of my community that have proven indispensable to my survival. I was experiencing so much success in the classroom that I relied on my job for fulfillment.

I was forced to confront pain and tragedy head-on in my workplace on February 14, 2008. At approximately three o'clock in the afternoon, a former graduate student from my university entered a lecture hall on campus and opened fire, killing five students and wounding 17 others, before turning the gun on himself. Our campus community was in a state of shock. Two of my students at that time were in the auditorium where the shootings occurred; one played dead in the fifth row, the other laid on top of three other students to protect them, and watched the entire shooting from the slats between the seats. Students in every class I taught had direct connections to the shootings: some were in the auditorium, some knew someone who was, some were outside when students were running out of the building, some were supposed to be in that class that day, but didn't go. One of the victims who died had not even gone to class that day, but stepped in at the end to meet his girlfriend

and walk her to her next class. Ten minutes before the shooter entered the auditorium, he had just left one of my students' apartments. Everyone who was part of our college community during the spring of 2008 seemed painfully connected to the tragedy.

After the shootings, the president of the university canceled classes for a week, and faculty and staff entered grief counseling and strategy sessions on how to move forward. Our school shootings marked a pivotal point in my life. I began to embrace the role of teacher as healer. Rules and regulations seemed irrelevant if they inhibited the healing process. Our community seemed to be in a state of posttraumatic stress, including myself, and I desired to play an integral role in moving us through the healing process.

The school shootings at my university awakened the pessimist in me. My eternal optimism seemed to fade; I could not believe that any human could harm our school community the way this shooter did. I began to seriously re-examine my purpose in life, caution and forethought were replaced by risk taking and spontaneity, and things that seemed important before the shootings lacked relevance afterwards. My dissertation writing sagged as I grappled with how to handle a professional community drowning in pain and a personal life drowning in loneliness.

The two years after the shootings seem surreal. To this day, they are blurry and fragmented. There were constant reminders of the tragedy. The semester after the shootings, I had a student who was sitting in the front row of the auditorium where the shootings took place; her best friend died on top of her. I had a student who was shot multiple times in the back and legs. I had students who told stories of watching bloody people running from the building. Some even provided first aid to shooting victims outside of the auditorium.

After the three-year anniversary of our school shooting, things finally started to feel normal again. Many of the student body had graduated or moved on. I was relieved to get through that anniversary; I felt my university community had united and healed together. I was feeling motivated to work on my dissertation, teach, raise my kids, and move forward in life. Life seemed back on track, for a week or so.

February 22, 2011 arrived like a dark thunderstorm, drenching me in more pain. I was checking my mailbox ten minutes before my class was to start. A secretary said, “Did you hear about the student who was killed in a car accident last night?” I said “No,” and we jumped online to get more information. I sat there and stared at the computer screen in a complete state of shock. The student who had been killed was Lexi. I grabbed my face, and my head collapsed between my knees, and I wept, right there in the office. Lexi was a former student of mine who became my teaching assistant, personal assistant, babysitter, house sitter, and pet sitter. She was my friend. She was like a daughter to me. I cried hard for Lexi.

I imagined Lexi pulling into my driveway every Friday, then bouncing to my front door with her gorgeous smile. We would sit on the floor in my house and work for hours. We talked. We laughed. Lexi was always happy to see me. She told me a couple years earlier that I had inspired her to go into teaching. She would say things like, “I want to be a teacher just like you!” I had Lexi in class when she was a freshman, and at the time of her death, she was student teaching and getting ready to graduate. She often told me I reminded her of her mother. She wanted us to meet.

I grieved deeply during the week of Lexi’s death. I took my kids to the College of Education’s memorial service for her. It was a solemn night. The audience took turns telling

stories at the podium. Toward the end of the service, I had finally mustered up the courage to speak. Through my tears, I told the story of my personal and professional relationship with Lexi. By the time I returned to my seat, I was sobbing again. I think it was the first time my kids saw me cry in grief. I realized that Lexi was the closest person to me to ever die. For months, I thought about her every day. The grief was overwhelming; it was as though a part of me had died. I remember vividly wondering why I could not seem to get a break from tragedy. I was so tired of hurting.

When I reflect on our school shootings in 2008, Lexi's death, and everything that has happened in my life since, I often wonder how I survived. How did I manage to keep my kids' worlds relatively stable? How did I teach 16 credit hours a semester, hold a house down, and care for two children? Great friends? Perseverance? Character? Hope? Luck? There is nothing lucky about feeling alone. Loneliness can be debilitating. Yet, being alone can help build strength. I have grappled with and vacillated between these two emotional perceptions throughout the last ten years. I believe that my children, students, colleagues, and friends have been fundamental in my survival and continued commitment to social justice. They have provided the support needed during difficult times, and when I am feeling exhausted or up against forces that seem unbeatable, something happens that reinvigorates my hope for a better world. This past year, Samuel, a student, wrote the following in his course summary:

Molly has definitely changed my life, and I will never forget her and her spontaneous attitude. I have never met such a charismatic individual; let alone a professor. Molly has never ceased to amaze me with her knowledge but also willingness to learn. Coming into college, I expected to feel intimidated by every professor I encountered because of their prestige, but Molly has broken down the barrier. Molly is the most accepting, loving, and beautiful individual I have ever met both inside and out. I can only imagine what struggles she has gone through to make her as strong as she is

today.
Her essence flows with knowledge and wisdom,
There is a radiant light which cannot be dimmed
The love that she shares is not that of a teacher,
But that of a lifelong friend.
Her soul is beauty,
Her heart is love,
Her pearly white teeth are whiter than a dove.
Flicks lighter like a Bic,
Spits love so sick,
She is the one and only Molly Swick

Sam's comment and poem made me laugh with joy. I remember reading it at the perfect moment, when I was pondering my sense of purpose, when I wondered if I really made a difference. Sam reminded me why I get up and fight for social justice every day. His insightful feedback, especially when he wrote, "I can only imagine what struggles she has gone through to make her as strong as she is today," was so perceptive; my lived experiences, both positive and negative, have enabled me to connect with many people in transformational ways. Sam's comments refueled my hope and reminded me that I have a gift: a profound love of humanity.

My life experiences have been unique. My childhood was dichotomous and confusing. I was loved, yet abandoned. I lacked family support in virtually all endeavors. I lived in more places than I can count, attended over 15 K-12 schools, and was forced to fend for myself at an early age. Having children was humbling, yet inspiring. I seemed to achieve the American dream and then lose it. I have experienced professional success and have maintained profound friendships. I have survived abandonment and marginalization, tragedy and depression, and marriage and divorce. I have experienced love and loss, joy and sorrow, and companionship and loneliness. Through each lived experience, whether joyful or painful, my ability to

empathize grows deeper, my compassion gets stronger, and my commitment to social justice has permeated all facets of my life.

Professional Background

In 1990, I graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Radio, Television, and Film. However, halfway through my senior year at CSULB, I realized I did not want to pursue a career in my chosen major of film production. I was a semester away from graduating and decided it was important to finish what I had started and so I graduated as planned. Meanwhile, I successfully completed a lifeguarding course that fall, and the professor invited me to be her assistant for her spring class. This marked the beginning of my career in teaching. My fellow students in the film department noticed I was spending more time teaching at the pool than hanging out in the filmmaker's social lounge. They were right. I was making my transition from filmmaker to teacher. I had such a passion and gift for helping others learn, it became apparent that I needed to continue higher education and get my teaching certification.

In 1993, I graduated from NIU with an M.S. Ed. and a 6-12 teaching certification in health and physical education. During my teacher education program, I was urged to remain neutral, to create hierarchical boundaries between my students and me, refrain from physically touching students, and stay away from controversy. This training never felt right to me. I often felt like an alien in the public school system. I couldn't understand why my progressive philosophy was not embraced. I felt as though I was viewed as a trouble maker if I questioned policy or curriculum. The climate was that of conformity and maintaining the

status quo: just do what you are told to do, and definitely do not rock the boat. After teaching at a public suburban high school for two years, I felt so constrained that I decided to quit my job.

I started teaching health and human performance courses at McHenry County College in Crystal Lake, Illinois. I remember thinking after my first week of teaching at MCC that I was going to teach adults forever! I realized I had found my niche. Unlike the secondary classroom, I felt I could actually be honest and open in the higher-education classroom. The academic freedom was liberating. The administration was supportive; they encouraged taking risks and being different. In the ten years following my first graduate degree, I continued teaching at MCC. Most of the courses I taught were health related.

I knew I wanted to teach at a university and decided to pursue a doctorate. I began the coursework for my doctoral degree in Adult and Higher Education in the spring of 2003. With a background in health education, my initial research was focused on the disparities in HIV diagnosis and treatment in African American communities. By this time, I had taught high school and college health education for over ten years. I was a unique health teacher because I focused on tackling issues of ignorance and injustice that frequently gave rise to problems with one's overall health. I believe I was an emerging Freireian educator at that time, but I did not have the language to articulate my practice, nor did I know there was scholarly support for my pedagogy. After participating in the study abroad trip to Brazil in 2003, I continued my inquiry into Freire's pedagogical ideas and attempted to incorporate them in my practice. The study abroad program to Brazil helped transform my philosophy of education and marked the beginning of my quest to become a Freireian scholar and practitioner.

In 2004, I was hired to teach a general education course called Education as an Agent for Change for the Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations Department at Northern Illinois University. Little did I know that this new position would not only change my life, but lead to a change in my research topic. I continued researching, writing, and presenting on the disparities of HIV/AIDS. It became quite apparent that this was a social justice issue. That realization resulted in my focus shifting from a health educator to a social justice educator, and within two years, I was teaching Education as an Agent for Change full time and no longer teaching health education.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) has always been included in my Education as an Agent for Change curriculum. I was experiencing great success implementing his ideas in my classroom, and determined that my mission had evolved into helping educators understand and incorporate Freire's ideas in their own classrooms. The higher education classroom can be a powerful and transformational place where students can become critically aware of the oppressive realities of society, reflect on these problems, and take action. When students are provided with opportunities to look beyond the obvious, they often develop a deeper understanding of the complex issues facing our society today, and they realize that we are capable of living peaceably if we work together. We can educate for change. When we start dialoguing solutions to injustices, many students who were hopeless, become hopeful. The transformation is magical. When I say, "We do not have to tolerate a society of injustices. We can find solutions, and it starts one person at a time. So what are we going to do about it?" they seem excited. When students feel that they are a part of the

learning process, they feel empowered. The result is a more hopeful citizenry, which is necessary if change is to take place.

I currently teach a class for the CHANCE program at NIU, which is designed to give students from struggling communities and schools, as well as students who may not have excelled academically in high school, an opportunity to get a higher education. In my CHANCE section, I am often the only White person in the classroom. Many of my students have very difficult backgrounds: some work, have children, live in poverty, have been involved in gang violence, have family members struggling with drug addiction, and have had family members murdered. In fact, I usually have at least one student who has a friend or family member murdered during the semester they are enrolled in my class. Interestingly, my lived experiences of struggle seem to parallel the experiences of my CHANCE students more than my White middle-class students.

I have now been teaching for 18 years. All of my teaching assignments have been in Illinois; however, the students have varied in socioeconomic class and racial background. I taught at a middle- to upper-class, predominately White high school, as well as a diverse, predominantly working-class high school. I taught at two community colleges; one racially diverse and one predominantly White. I now teach at a large state university that draws from the inner city and the middle-class suburbs of Chicago as well as the rural farmlands of Illinois. The student population at NIU has become increasingly diverse racially and socioeconomically.

My experiences teaching have been rich with what I consider student transformation as well as personal transformation. Many students have indicated that their experiences in

Education as an Agent for Change have enlightened them to new ways of thinking. I have been studying Freire for nine years now. His pedagogical ideas have truly transformed my practice. I have grown as a teacher as a result of his ideas, and I am now able to articulate what I do in the classroom. As bell hooks (1994) eloquently affirms, “Paulo was one of the thinkers whose work gave me a language. He made me think deeply about the construction of an identity of resistance” (p. 46). I am committed to helping students understand the topics of racism, sexism, and classism. My lifelong mission is to fight for the rights of the marginalized, to give voice to those traditionally unheard, to create awareness of current forms of oppression, and to encourage students to think critically about the world around them.

I believe our current educational system is ripe for Freire’s pedagogical language of hope. I want to be a part of the new generation of Freireian scholars and practitioners with the ultimate goal of carrying on Freire’s legacy for future generations. It is important for educators to examine their own pedagogical practices and educational philosophies as social justice educators and other activists strive to get the United States moving in a fairer, more just direction. This involves developing a pedagogical language of hope.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter II begins with an overview of some key aspects of Freire’s history and educational philosophy. Social justice ideas and theories derived from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) that I believe are relevant to North American higher education are described. Freire’s history,

philosophy, and theories are supported with literature. Chapter II concludes with specific examples in the United States of Freire's ideas and theories, which are supported with research. The intent is to present the argument that Freire's ideas and theories are not only applicable to developing nations, but to the United States as well.

The research method, data collection, and data analysis process are presented in Chapter III. I begin with an overview of autoethnography and describe how the method is used for my study. I discuss potential limitations of using autoethnography as a research method. I then detail how I gathered and analyzed data, including a description of the coding and theming process. I describe how I address each of the four research questions included in this dissertation. Data that support the themes that emerged from the analysis and interpretation process are presented in Chapter IV, including data collected from students who support, as well as resist my implementation of Freire's ideas and theories. I include a formal teaching evaluation to provide a perspective of my implementation from other academics. In Chapter V, I present data collected from my dialogue partner, another self-identified Freireian educator. The intent of the methodology and findings chapters is to describe the research process and present data relevant to the research questions for this study.

In Chapter VI, the final chapter, I analyze data presented throughout the dissertation and reflect on Freire's ideas and theories presented. I address what I learned about myself as an aspiring Freireian educator, which includes an analysis of the successes and struggles implementing Freire's pedagogy of hope. I compare and contrast my dialogue partner's interpretation and implementation of Freire's ideas to my own. I describe our similarities and differences in our classroom environments. Implications for other social justice educators,

including embracing Freire's pedagogy of hope, using mass media and popular culture, adding humor and music to the Freireian classroom, and strategies for handling student resistance are discussed. I conclude with implications for future research and closing comments.

Additional information is presented in the appendixes. Definitions of specific Freireian and social justice education terms and concepts, team meetings, the values clarification assignment, and the bell hooks on Freire skit that were used in the courses included in this study are in Appendixes B, C, D and E. Additional student data that specifically supports the findings in Chapter IV are included in Appendix F. The Dialogue Partner Questionnaire is presented in Appendix G.

This is a reflective personal narrative in which I inject analysis of the relevancy and applicability of the material to social justice pedagogy and support my ideas with literature on Freire and social justice education. The literature reviewed, though formally in Chapter II, is woven throughout the dissertation. Since there are few, if any, autoethnographic studies of this kind, I hope this inquiry contributes to the literature on Freire.

CHAPTER II

PAULO FREIRE: PHILOSOPHY, THEORIES AND RELEVANCY

“The liberation of individuals acquires profound meaning only when the transformation of society is achieved.” (Freire, 1994, p. 85)

This chapter begins with an overview of some key aspects of Freire’s history and educational philosophy, including his ideas on promoting critical consciousness; understanding education as a political act; engaging in praxis; rejecting teacher neutrality; confronting discrimination; embracing love, hope, and humility; and respecting students’ lived experiences. Social justice theories derived from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994) that are relevant to North American higher education are described. Included are Freire’s theories on moving from oppression to liberation, from dehumanization to humanization, from anti-dialectical to dialectical pedagogy, from banking to problem-posing education, and from cultural invasion to cultural pluralism. Finally, specific examples of hegemony, oppression, dehumanization, cultural invasion, false neutrality, and discrimination in the United States are presented. Freire’s history, philosophy, theories, and relevancy are supported with literature.

Paulo Freire

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator, will be remembered as a revolutionist whose theories influenced, and continue to influence, educational and social movements globally. McLaren (2000b) claims Freire “was one of the first internationally recognized educational thinkers who fully appreciated the relationship among education, politics, imperialism, and liberation” (p.1). Freire led an adventurous and courageous life, traveled throughout the world teaching others about his pedagogical ideas of liberation, and made every effort to make this a more civil and compassionate world to live in.

Freire was born into a middle-class Brazilian family, however, as a young boy, his family was greatly impacted by an economic depression in Brazil. The family became so poverty stricken that Freire cites the pangs of hunger during his childhood as the motivating force for devoting his life to ending oppression. Freire’s family lacked access to education, and he learned to read and write under a mango tree, using sticks in the dirt. He was eager to continue studying after he learned the basics, but lacked the resources. His mother convinced a teacher to allow him to continue his education tuition free. In exchange, he taught Portuguese, which helped him develop a strong background in language and grammar.

As a result of his childhood struggles, he developed a deep respect for the poor and other marginalized groups. Allman and Wallis (1997) write, “From unexpected childhood poverty, through his struggle to educate himself, the literacy schemes, imprisonment and later fame, Freire stood at all times for the interests of the powerless – the oppressed” (p. 233). In 1962, the president of Brazil appointed Freire to Director of National Literacy, where he

focused on teaching peasants to read and write. In 1964, a military coup toppled the government and imprisoned Freire for ten weeks because they viewed him as a threat to the new regime. He never gave up though, and he described his prison experience as an opportunity to grow personally and learn to empathize with others who had been imprisoned. He was then exiled, which “removed Paulo from Brazilian politics in the prime of his life, when he was at the peak of his activists energies, intimately linked to a society roused for transformation” (Shor, 1998, p. 78).

Though most noted for his work with illiterate adults, Freire authored numerous books and articles on pedagogical theory that will undoubtedly remain classic educational tools for teachers and students worldwide. Perhaps Freire’s most famous book is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which he wrote in 1968 while he was in exile. Torres (2009) writes, “I am convinced that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* represents the most important contribution to the educational philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century, just as John Dewey’s *Education and Democracy* marks the first” (p. 3). The book was banned in Brazil after the coup in 1964. Globally, however, educators devoted to liberation of the oppressed embraced his work. Hall (1998) claims, “Between the early 1970s and 1980s, Paulo had become the world’s best known intellectual voice supporting a socially transformative vision of adult education” (p. 95). During his 16-year exile, Freire spent time fighting oppression in other countries, including Chile, Argentina, Grenada, Nicaragua, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, and Switzerland (Hall, 1998).

After a democratically controlled government was reinstated, Freire returned to Brazil in 1980 and became active in the Brazilian Workers Party. During his 16-year exile, Brazil

had changed, and Freire felt he needed to relearn his native country. In a personal dialogue Jeria (1984) had with Freire, Jeria writes that Freire claimed,

I return with the humble conviction that exile has not given me the right to teach Brazil, but the opportunity to know the country better....Brazil did not stop while we were away and we exiles are back home to learn everything over again, even how to cross the street. (p. 1)

Not only did Freire call for teachers and students to remain humble, he embodied humility in all aspects of his life.

He spent his remaining years writing and speaking internationally. At the 1985 World Assembly of Adult Education in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Freire was appointed Honorary President of the International Council for Adult Education (Hall, 1998). Jeria (1984) continues, “He did not have time to answer all of the letters that he received asking him to participate in seminars and courses in universities around the world” (p. 3). Roberts and Peters (2010) support Jeria’s claim writing, “Freire was in heavy demand as a speaker in many parts of the world from the early 1970s until his death in 1997” (p. 9). Freire served as the Secretary of Education for the municipality of Sao Paulo from 1989 to 1991 (Roberts & Peters, 2010). Today, “Freire is one of the most frequently cited thinkers in all of academia” (Souto-Manning & Smagorinsky, 2010, p. 41).

Educational Philosophy

Critical Consciousness

Freire believed critical literacy should be used to empower people to end oppression. Apple (1999) describes Freire’s work:

Our task is to ‘name the world,’ collectively to build an education that is both counter-hegemonic and is part of the larger terrain of struggle over what counts as literacy, who should control it, and how critical literacy (what he calls conscientization) was connected to real struggles by real people in real relations in real communities. (p. 5)

The aim of conscientization “was for the illiterate adults to move from a state of either magical or naïve consciousness toward (an ever-evolving) critical consciousness” (Roberts, 1998, p. 111). When students become critically conscious (conscientization), they develop “an awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote the life opportunities for particular groups,” this awareness is intimately linked with and shaped by students’ realities (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 87). Noguera and Cohen (2006) argue, “It is our democratic responsibility to foster critical thinking among our students” (p. 578). Critical literacy and conscientization are integral components of critical thinking, yet Freire’s idea of critical awareness is profoundly deeper than a typical understanding of critical thinking, because it includes developing an understanding of hegemonic practices that lead to oppression, as well as participating in praxis (reflection and action), which are all necessary aspects of authentic liberation. Schelling (1987) describes Freire’s idea of conscientization happening when:

a fragmented view of reality is replaced by a totalizing one, enabling the learners to gain distance from their reality and their previous perception of it, and through the development of their critical awareness of their oppression, creating the preconditions for their liberating transformation of it. (p. 122)

The process of conscientization moves beyond mere awareness, beyond a naïve consciousness, to a state where humans use their critical thinking skills to become active participants in the struggle for liberation.

Interestingly, Freire stopped using the term conscientization in 1974 (Boshier, 1999; Gadotti, 1994; Torres, 1998) because “he felt that it had been loosely used in a manner which stripped it of its actual significance” (Mayo, 1999, p. 63). However, with this understanding of Freire’s concerns, when the term conscientization is used throughout this dissertation, it refers to Freire’s original objective of students becoming critically conscious of the interlocking political, social, and economic forces affecting their lives, which involves providing opportunities for students “to develop sophisticated critical analysis of their own social contexts” (Cammarota, 2011, p. 835) that leads to student “transformation of self and his or her place and role in society” (Cammarota, 2011, p. 828).

Freire believed critical consciousness was a powerful political tool (Berger, 1977). Freire (1970) argued, “Education of its very nature is directive and political.” He did not separate education from politics. Roberts (1998) continues, “The decision to encourage someone to become literate is a political one, just as the denial of literacy is also a political decision” (p. 108). Ginwright (2010) describes education for conscientization as “building an awareness of the intersections of personal and political life by pushing youth (students) to understand how personal struggles have profound political explanations” (p. 10). The aim of liberatory education is to create critical consciousness of the interconnectedness of political, economic, and social forces, as well as the advocating of praxis, moving conscientization beyond mere critical awareness toward a political process.

Freire had a “proactive sense of teaching” (Hamilton, 1999, p.176). His concept of conscientization includes praxis, which involves reflection followed by action or the linking of thought and action (Boshier, 1999). In Freire’s model, “the teacher becomes facilitator, the

traditional class becomes a cultural circle, the emphasis shifts from lecture to problem-posing strategies, and the content, previously removed from the learners' experience, becomes relevant to the group" (Schugurensky, 1998, p. 18). He was a progressive educator who challenged traditional methods of teaching and encouraged educators to address injustices in society through education.

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire reminded us that a critical understanding of oppression will not succeed in and of itself in achieving liberation from oppression. Nevertheless, the comprehension of oppression is "indispensable" to a new vision of the world based on justice and freedom (Freire, 1994, p. 31). As an educator, my first student objective is conscientization of hegemony and oppression; if students are not critically aware that oppression exists in the United States, they will not take action.

Rejection of Neutrality

Freire did not advocate education as a neutral field, rather an instrument for social transformation (Lankshear, 1993; Tadeu da Silva & McLaren, 1993). Darder (2002) supports this notion, "Education never is, has been, or will be a neutral enterprise" (p. 56). In fact, Freire argued that neutral education, or false neutrality, is in itself hegemonic and is designed to maintain the status quo and discourage critical thinking (Armstrong, 2003; Macedo, 2006). Referencing Freire, Lather (1986) agrees, "There is no neutral education" (p. 257). Thompson (1980) writes:

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the "practice of

freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 26)

Allman (1994) describes Freire’s rejection of neutrality: “To Freire, every educational or cultural process can be seen as one which either domesticates people or as one which aims to liberate them, or rather to prepare them to liberate themselves” (p. 149). Teaching straight from the textbook is often thought of as neutral. However, Freire would argue this false neutrality is, in fact, political, as the objective is often to present the dominant perspective that keeps society intact.

Rejecting neutrality does not imply an imposition of the educators’ beliefs upon the students. Rejecting neutrality does, however, require utmost respect for students’ ideas. In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire expanded upon the need to have “respect for cultural differences, respect for the context to which one has come, a criticism of ‘cultural invasion,’ of sectarianism, and a defense of radicalness, of which I speak in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)” (p. 34). Radical pedagogy can only work when different ideas are explored. Freire (1994) wrote,

My ethical duty, as one of the subjects, one of the agents, of a practice that can never be neutral – the educational – is to express my respect for differences in ideas and positions. I must respect even positions opposed to my own, positions that I combat earnestly and with passion. (p. 66)

Freire encouraged educators to provide opportunities for students to disagree with the content or philosophy of the educator and argued that critical dialogue that emphasizes the necessity of accepting differences requires radicalness, not neutrality.

Discrimination

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire expanded his discussion of class discrimination presented in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), to include race and sex discrimination when dialoging remedies to oppression. Freire (1994) passionately described his own value system regarding discrimination:

My rebellion against every kind of discrimination, from the most explicit and crying to the most covert and hypocritical, which is no less offensive and immoral, has been with me from my childhood. Since as far back as I can remember, I have reacted almost instinctively against any word, deed, or sign of racial discrimination, or for that matter, discrimination against the poor. (p. 124)

Discrimination continues to threaten the survival and the thriving of the human race. Though forward progress can be found, most cultures struggle with problems associated with racism and other forms of discrimination. Freire (1994) argued, “Racism is alive and well, crushing, shredding people’s lives, and besmirching the world” (p. 130). Sometimes discrimination is obvious, other times it is not; nonetheless, discrimination is harmful because it dehumanizes. Freire (1994) continued, “Race and class discrimination is an aggressive, ostentatious discrimination, at times. At times, it is covert, instead. But wicked it always is” (p. 163).

Darder (2002) urges social justice educators to:

become fully conscious to what is perhaps America’s most concealed truth – an all-consuming capitalist system that is everywhere at work in sustaining, perpetuating, and exacerbating all forms of social discrimination, economic exploitation, cultural invasion, and systematic violence against women, gays and lesbians, work-class people, and racialized populations. (p. 13)

Freire addressed the fact that many people do not regard themselves as racist. He argued that the denial of racism is a major obstacle that must be overcome if people are to

seriously address oppression. Freire (1994) wrote, “In relations between Blacks and Whites... there seems to be, on the part of many Whites who do not regard themselves as racist, something that encumbers them in their dealings with Blacks, and prevents them from mounting an authentic battle against racism” (p. 132). He urged progressive educators to address the denial of racist attitudes and behaviors; only then, in a safe classroom that provides participatory spaces for all, can educators facilitate dialogue regarding problems of race, sex and class.

Freire was often accused of using sexist language in his work (Mayo, 1993; McLaren & Tadeu de Silva, 1993). Darder (2002) claims, “For almost three decades, feminists across the country fiercely critiqued the sexism of his language” (p. 43). In the Forward of *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter* (Leonard & McLaren, 1993), Freire wrote, “Since the 1970s, I have learned much from feminism and have come to define my work as feminist, seeing feminism closely connected to the process of self-reflexivity and political action for human freedom” (p. x). He addressed these criticisms, urging all scholars and publishers to make efforts to change their sexist language. Freire (1994) continued, “Let it not be said that this is a minor problem. It is a major problem” (p. 55).

There is a noticeable difference in Freire’s language in *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) compared to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). When he references gender, he includes both genders, and he devotes considerable time to discussing discrimination against women. Mayo (2001) takes note of this: “Freire has gone to great lengths to rectify the totalizing gender discourse of his earlier works, thus responding positively to the numerous American feminists who took issue with him on this matter” (p. 387). Many feminists have recognized Freire’s

efforts to address the criticism of his sexist language in his early writings. Weiler (1991) writes, “One must concede that the machismo of the early works has been drastically toned down in the more recent ones” (p. 5). Freire (1994) demonstrated his own praxis by reflecting on his use of language in his past writings and taking action to change the sexist tone in his later works, and he urged everyone to actively fight against the oppression of women:

Discrimination against women, expressed and committed by sexist discourse, and enfolded in concrete practices, is a colonial way of treating them, and therefore incompatible with any progressive position, regardless of whether the person taking the position be a man or woman. (p. 55)

Both men and women oppress women, and the oppression is so ingrained in our culture that addressing it requires a shift in language. Freire (1994) wrote, “The rejection of a sexist ideology, which necessarily involves the re-creation of language, is part of the possible dream of a change of the world” (p. 55). This shift away from sexist language is necessary in our quest for mutual humanization, which includes active efforts to confront discrimination.

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire expanded his discussion started in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that focused primarily on socioeconomic class struggles and urged educators to consider class, race, and sex simultaneously when finding remedies to discrimination:

The process of learning that a critical comprehension of the so-called minorities of one’s culture is not exhausted in questions of race and sex, but requires a comprehension of the class division in that culture, as well. In other words, sex does not explain everything. Nor does race. Nor does class. (p. 136)

Ellsworth (1989) supports Freire’s claim stating, “Any antiracist pedagogy must be defined through an awareness of the ways in which oppressive structures are the result of intersections between racist, classist, sexist, ableist, and other oppressive dynamics” (p. 303). hooks (1994)

presents her readers with the concept of “White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy,” which also stresses the interconnectedness of the forces of oppression.

Love, Hope, and Humility

Integral to the success of Freire’s work and life was the emotion of love. He firmly believed that love is “the emotional element that drives a person forward in any humanizing activity” (Mayo, 2001, p. 385). Throughout his writings, he emphasized the importance of love and education: “I could never think of education without love and that is why I think I am an educator, first of all because I feel love” (Freire, as cited in McLaren, 2002, p. 253). Most Freireian scholars write about Freire’s insistence that education for liberation must be motivated by love of humanity for it to be authentic.

Freire’s love for humanity and the world was the driving force of his pedagogy of hope. Darder (2002) writes, “There is no question that Freire’s greatest contribution to the world was his capacity to be a loving human being” (p. 35). Ana Maria Araujo (Nita) Freire (1998) supports this, “I watched as he lived for love and to love” (p. 3). In *Chronicles of Love: My Life with Paulo Freire* (2001), Nita writes that Freire “passionately lived every moment of his life” (p. 165). His optimistic, lighthearted personality kept him youthful until the end. Nita (2001) talks about his love of whistling:

When he came home, his whistle from a distance was a tender sign that it was indeed he who had come in. I always took great delight in this habit, which he loved, and that provided us with so many moments of happiness. So many times he declared his love for me in this: simply whistling! (p. 35)

Freire's love was revolutionary. It was unique. It was gentle. In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire quoted Che Guevara, "Let me tell you, at the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the genuine revolutionary is animated by feelings of love. It is impossible to imagine an authentic revolutionary without this quality" (Guevara, as cited in Freire, 1994, p. 34-35).

Darder (2002) describes Freire and love: "He firmly held, as did Che Guevara before him, that it is this revolutionary love which fuels our political commitment to liberation and ultimately must embody our work in schools and society" (p. 31). Freire had great respect for Guevara; the two had similar objectives to end oppression, and both were motivated by revolutionary love, which is why it is important to draw parallels between Guevara's and Freire's ideas. However, it is important to clarify that Freire did not support violent revolutions; he advocated peaceful liberation driven by dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis (McLaren, 2000a).

Cornell West (1993a) writes that Freire "dares to tread where even Marx refused to walk – on the terrain where the revolutionary love of struggling human beings sustains their faith in each other and keeps hope alive within themselves and in history" (p. xiv). Freire believed his ideas of liberation presented throughout his work could only be implemented by educators motivated by love. His life and pedagogy embodied the emotion of love of humanity and the world. McLaren (2000a) adds, "For Freire, pedagogy has as much to do with the teachable heart as the teachable mind" (p. 161).

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire urged educators to reach out to all people, especially the oppressed, with sincere love:

What the rejected ones need those forbidden to be, prevented from being- is not our tepidity but our warmth, our solidarity – yes, and our love, but an unfeigned love, not a mistrustful one, not a soppy love, but an ‘armed’ love. (p. 133)

His love was holistic, and he conveyed love in multiple ways. Nita Freire (1998)

asserts that Paulo expressed acts of love by touching, looking, and listening. Nita eloquently writes:

He transformed this apparently simple gesture of touching and looking at another person into a form of communication in which his desire for equality and fraternity was implicit; it manifested coherence and alliance, gave witness to satisfaction and happiness due to life itself. The experience of the relationship established at that moment implied that there was a new possibility for knowledge and love. (p. 4)

Directly related to love is the act and philosophy of humility (Mayo, 2001). Freire strongly urged teachers and students to remain humble. Darder (2002) writes of Freire, “He believed that humility is the quality that allows us to listen beyond our differences, and thus represents a cornerstone in developing our intimacy with democracy” (p. 48). He encouraged those in the educational process to remain open minded, and to realize learning is a never-ending process. Freire (1994) wrote, “The more tolerant, the more open and forthright, the more critical, the more curious and humble they [educators] become, the more authentically they will take up the practice of teaching” (p. 67). He reminded educators that they can relearn new ways of thinking about what they already know, as well as learn new things from students and other educators (Mayo, 2001). Progressive educators realize that they do not possess all knowledge and that learning is multi-dimensional. Freire (1994) confirmed this:

First, the one who knows must know that he or she does not know all things; second, the one who knows not must know that he or she is not ignorant of everything. Without this dialectical understanding of knowledge and ignorance, it is impossible, in

a progressive democratic outlook, for the one who knows to teach the one who knows not. (p. 166)

According to Freire, hope, inspired by love, is an ontological need, essential to our knowing and being. Freire argued that education motivated by love and humility would be incomplete if not accompanied by hope. McLaren & Tadeu de Silva (1993) describe Freire's idea of hope:

It is a hope of passionate remembrances, of finding a common ground of struggle rather than a common culture, of new spaces of possibility rather than arenas of despair and manufactured doubt. It is a hope that is fundamentally Freireian. (p. 80)

It is important for students to understand that when people do not have hope for a better life, for a better world with less suffering, the consequences are devastating, debilitating, and sometimes even deadly. Students may have difficulty understanding the impact of hopelessness, and progressive educators need to help them realize that without hope, people have nothing to live for.

As an ontological need, hope is part of our human essence. When we feel hopeless, we must learn that hope is still inside of us: we just may not be able to find it at certain times in our lives. McLaren (2000a) claims, "Freire understood that while we often abandon hope, we are never abandoned by hope. This is because hope is forever engraved in the human heart and inspires us to reach beyond the carnal limits of our species being" (p. 172). Embracing love, humility, and hope are fundamental aspects of liberatory pedagogy if student transformation is to take place.

Respect for Lived Experiences

Freire believed authentic liberatory education requires teachers to respect their students. He argued, “I must, without ever denying my dream or my utopia before my educands, respect them” (1994, p. 65). Without respect for students, any attempts at dialogue are inauthentic. Gadotti (1994) supports this claim: “The first virtue of dialogue consists of respect for those who are being educated, not only as people but also in the way they are considered examples of social practice” (p. 50). Respecting students who agree with the educator’s perspective requires little effort; respecting those who disagree is difficult. However, Freire (1994) urged educators to take on this challenge: “I must respect even positions opposed to my own” (p. 66). The type of respect Freire spoke about is not limited to their cognitive abilities, it transcends the whole student, especially his or her life experiences.

Educators seeking student transformation must develop an understanding of what experiences have impacted their students, including “their speech, their way of counting and calculating, their ideas about the so-called other world, their religiousness, their knowledge about health, the body, sexuality, life, death, the power of saints, magic spells, must all be respected” (Freire, 1994, p. 72). Duncan-Andrade (2007) argues that effective educators “build intellectually rigorous lessons that are relevant to the real and immediate conditions of their students’ lives so that students can think and respond critically for themselves” (p. 627). Not only does the progressive educator model respect for student’s lived experiences, he or she must also encourage others to respect the lived experiences of people from different groups (Freire, 1994).

In a conversation between Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, which was published in *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (1990), Freire references the importance of respecting the lived experiences of students throughout the book. For example, he claimed:

Respecting the knowledge of the people for me is a political attitude consistent with the political choice of the educator if he or she thinks about a different kind of society. In other words, I cannot fight for a freer society if at the same time I don't respect the knowledge of the people. (p. 101)

The silencing of students' lived experiences marginalizes, invalidates, and dehumanizes them. When educators encourage students to connect their lived experiences to their pedagogical experiences, it "becomes a counter-hegemonic process" (Choules, 2007, p. 169).

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire expanded on the knowledge of lived experiences and how important it is for educators to respect and try and understand these experiences:

You never get there by starting from there, you get there by starting from some here. This means, ultimately, that the educator must not be ignorant of, underestimate, or reject any of the 'knowledge of living experience' with which educands come to school. (p. 47)

Cammarota (2009-10) writes passionately about the importance of embracing student's lived experiences as fundamental to social justice education. He argues communities reach their social justice goals "by acknowledging the value of informal knowledge" (p. 12). Freire (1994) urged educators to never "underestimate or reject knowledge had from living experiences" (p. 71). He believed that relevancy of learning material can only be established by learning about students' lives. Progressive educators should "take careful account of the reading of the world being made by popular groups and expressed in their discourse, their syntax, their semantics, their dreams and desires" (Freire, 1994, p. 12). Darder (2002) takes

this notion further claiming that Freire “believed it was impossible to teach without educators’ knowing what took place in their students’ world” (p. 46).

Educational Theories

From Oppression to Liberation

Freire supported Antonio Gramsci’s assertion that hegemonic practices, or policies that are developed and implemented to maintain or enhance the power and wealth of the powerful, usually at the expense of the marginalized, have created oppressive situations worldwide. Freire (1970) described oppression as situations that resulted when one group of people is exploited by another group, hindering their “pursuit of self-affirmation” (p. 55). Freire believed oppression is socially constructed and “argued forcefully that poverty, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination are not natural traits of our humanity” (Darder, 2002, p. 31).

Social class analysis is a central theme of Freire’s work. Souto-Manning & Smagorinsky (2010) write that his writings “aimed to teach those oppressed by inequitable educational opportunities and income distribution to question their location in society and ultimately seek to alter personal agency and economic structures in order to live more fulfilling lives” (p. 42). He stressed the reality of hegemonic practices worldwide and promoted radical critical pedagogy that empowers the oppressed. Shor (1998) writes, “It was consistent for him to focus his hopes for transformation on a broad social movement rather on education alone” (p. 78).

When developing and implementing educational policy, Freire argued that the dominant class seeks to maintain the status quo, often without even realizing it, and many in the dominant class are unaware of the harm their actions do to others. They may hide behind false generosity claiming to create jobs for the working class. However, the training is often designed not to help the working class rise on the economic ladder, but to keep them where they are. Freire (1994) wrote, “The dominant class so eagerly offers workers – a training that merely reproduces the working class as such” (p. 114). Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) support Freire’s argument claiming dominant groups “have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages” (p. 281), and they argue that developing a understanding of the dynamics of differing objectives between dominant and non-dominant groups is central to liberatory pedagogy.

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire claimed that a critical understanding of oppression does not, in itself, liberate the oppressed. However, he argued, “the revelation is a step in the right direction” (p. 23). Freire believed the movement to end oppression must start with the oppressed themselves, because it is only the oppressed who truly understand the plight of being oppressed. Gadotti (1994) reinforces Freire, claiming, a “new society can only be the result of the struggle of the popular masses, who are the only ones who can make such a change” (p.49). Authentic liberation benefits all members of society, even the oppressors. However, the oppressed must liberate themselves first. Freire (1970) continued, “This fight... will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity” (p. 45). Furthermore, Freire (1970) called for the oppressed people in the world “to liberate

themselves and their oppressors as well” (p. 44). Freire revisited this concept in *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) stating,

Oppressors, wreaking violence upon others, and forbidding them to be, are likewise unable to be. In withdrawing from them the power to oppress and crush, the oppressed, struggling to be, restore to them the humanity lost in the use of oppression. This is why only the oppressed, by achieving their liberation can liberate the oppressors. (p. 82)

Freire (1970) linked violence to oppression and stated, “Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons- not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized” (p. 55). Simply put, the conditions of the working class, which are created and maintained by the dominant class, create a climate of violence and hopelessness. The oppressed may give up on the possibility of liberation when they view the oppressors as too powerful to be challenged. Often people who are oppressed feel helpless. Freire (1994) argued, “The more the oppressed see the oppressors as ‘unbeatable,’ endowed with an invincible power, the less they believe in themselves” (p. 108). The lack of self-efficacy in many oppressed populations prohibits them from taking action toward self-liberation. Educators can help people understand that “it is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors” (Freire, 1970, p. 56).

One solution is for the oppressed to find vulnerabilities in the oppressors, for 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. 65). Helping people recognize their oppression and empowering them to reject the oppression was central to Freire’s pedagogy. Both the oppressor and the oppressed benefit from authentic liberation. Once the oppressed critically understand their oppression, they can resist the

oppression, which can lead to a self-liberation. Freire (1994) argued, “Through self-liberation, in and through the needed, just struggle, the oppressed, as an individual and as a class, liberates the oppressor, by the simple fact of forbidding him or her to keep on oppressing” (p. 85). Freire (1994) writes:

One of the tasks of a progressive popular education, yesterday as today, is to seek by means of a critical understanding of the mechanisms of social conflict, to further the process in which the weakness of the oppressed turns into a strength capable of converting the oppressors’ strength into weakness. This is a hope that moves us. (p. 108)

Freire (1970) discussed the importance of allies, which are “certain members of the oppressor class who join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation” (p. 60). In order for the ally/oppressed relationship to work, oppressors must strive for solidarity with the oppressed by “fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these ‘beings for another’” (Freire, 1970, p. 49). Furthermore, Freire believed liberation, a human phenomenon, can only be achieved through dialogue, and it is through this dialogical process that the oppressed become critically conscious of their oppression (conscientization) and the oppressor becomes critically conscious they are oppressing others.

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire reflects on the period between 1964 and 1969 when he was in exile, traveling to many countries and educating people on his theories of ending oppression. Freire (1994) remembered fondly that when the oppressed liberated themselves, “the ‘culture of silence’ was suddenly shattered, and they had discovered not only that they can speak, but that their critical discourse upon the world, their world, was a way of remaking that world” (p. 30). He spoke of witnessing the transformation of societies, which

was what he fought for his entire life, and claimed, “The liberation of individuals acquires profound meaning only when the transformation of society is achieved” (Freire, 1994, p. 85).

From Dehumanization to Humanization

Oppression results from hegemonic policies that dehumanize individuals or groups, preventing people from achieving their full potential. Darder (2002) asserts, “Economic inequalities and social injustice dehumanizes us, distorting our capacity to love each other, the world, and ourselves” (p. 35). Freire (1994) believed humans are beings of an “ongoing, curious search” with a “passion to know,” but that once we dehumanize, we can oppress and harm without guilt. He spoke of humanization as a quest and dehumanization as a distortion of this quest. “We live the life of a vocation, a calling, to humanization, and that in dehumanization, which is a concrete fact in history, we live the life of a distortion of the call – never another calling” (Freire, 1994, p. 84).

Freire argued that the rights of the working class are often ignored. Usually it is the dominant class that dictates policy, including educational curriculum. Poor students are expected to adapt to the dominant language and culture. Freire (1994) believed this form of dehumanization neglects the human rights of the working class, which “has a right to know its geography, and its language – or rather, a critical understanding of language in its dialectical relationship with thought and world: the dialectical interactions of language, ideology, social classes, and education” (p. 115). These convictions stem from his deep respect for the poor, and he urged educators worldwide to adopt this respect as well.

Gaining knowledge is integral in the process of humanization; denying people knowledge results in dehumanization. Freire (1994) described “humanization as an ontological vocation of the human being” (p. 84) essential to both our knowing and being (Aronowitz , 1993; Leonard & McLaren, 1993). It is a quest to feel fully human. According to Freire, both the oppressed and oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization. It is not just the oppressed who are dehumanized, “the oppressor is dehumanized in dehumanizing the oppressed” (Freire, 1994, p. 85). He believed a thirst for education and social justice is a natural aspect of being human; oppression inhibits this quest for knowledge, resulting in dehumanization. Freire (1994) continued, “Neither one, humanization or dehumanization, is sure destiny....This is why one is calling, and the other, distortion of the calling” (p. 84). When the oppressor is dehumanized, he or she cannot live fully either. Yet, when freed by the oppressed, liberation and humanization are possible.

Freire (1970) believed dehumanization is a condition that can be transformed if people begin to view themselves as “humans in the process of achieving freedom” (p. 49). Freire embraced the notion that humans have a common objective: to feel fully human. He identified as a humanist and believed that a true humanist can be recognized by his or her trust in the people. Freire (1970) urged humanist educators to partner with “students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization” (p. 75). He viewed people and the world as interconnected because they exist in constant interaction, and he linked humanism to utopia and hope: “Utopia would not be possible if it lacked the taste for freedom that permeates the vocation to humanization. Or if it lacked hope, without which we do not struggle” (1994, p. 84). Finally, humanist education must include dialogue and praxis: “the

action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, p. 79). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) embrace humanism’s call for dialogue and praxis: “We become closer to our humanity and agents of our own development when we reflect and act to transform the conditions influencing our existence” (p. 87).

From Anti-dialectical to Dialectical Pedagogy

Freire (1970) believed it is through dialogue that humans name the world. Gadotti (1994) writes, “Paulo Freire insists on the necessity of dialogue as a teaching strategy. Schools should always listen to what their pupils say about what is taught to them and should make continuous evaluations” (p. 29). Dialoguing for critical consciousness involves ongoing planning; students’ experiences must always be considered. The teacher grows with the students while striving to facilitate dialogue that is meaningful. Students “not only retain their identity, but actively defend it” (Freire, 1994, p. 101).

Freire claimed dialogue essential when implementing education as the practice of freedom. Weiler (1988) writes of Freire, “His insistence on the necessity of dialogue between teacher and students as subjects has influenced the works of a number of educators who have attempted to create liberating ways of teaching” (p. 126). Torres and Reyes (2011) characterize dialogue as “a counter-hegemonic way of communication” (p. 62). Darder (2002) describes dialogue as “a continuous, purposefully motivated, and open exchange that provides participants the space in which, together, to reflect, critique, affirm, challenge, act, and ultimately transform our collective understanding of the world” (p. 82). Through dialogue,

students can achieve significance as human beings; student voices are validated and their lives outside the classroom become relevant. Darder (2002) continues:

forms of social consciousness must be actively cultivated and nourished within classrooms through critical dialogues and social relationships that reshape our perceptions and interactions with one another and the world in which we must survive as teachers and students. Through an educational practice that encourages ongoing questioning and the development of critical social thought, teachers and students can engage critically the profound social, political, and economic issues at work in their lives. (p. 15)

If education is to be liberatory, teachers “cannot think without the people, nor for the people, but only with the people” (Freire, 1970, p. 131). This theory is in stark contrast to anti-dialogical education, which seeks to conquer, divide, rule, and manipulate, with the objective to remain in power. Anti-dialogical education hides behind the myth of meritocracy. It is also committed to creating a climate of internalized oppression, which in turn prevents the critical consciousness Freire (1994) believed so deeply in:

I hope we progressives, who suffer, who lose companions, siblings, friends, in the perversity of all the coups we have had come crashing down on us, we will be careful not to lend an ear to these falsehoods, which masquerade as postmodernity but are hoary as the bullying and despotism of the mighty.(p. 165)

In anti-dialogical education, student’s voices are not heard, which implies that their worlds are insignificant in the pedagogical process; this, in itself, is dehumanizing because it denies the relevance of students’ realities (Gadotti, 1994; Wagner, Knudsen, & Harper, 2000). Furthermore, when teachers develop an understanding of their students’ lived experiences, it enables them to adopt their students’ language. As Giroux (1990) writes, “Developing a pedagogy that takes the notion of student voice seriously means developing a critically

affirmative language that works both with and on the experiences that students bring to the classroom” (p. 95).

Authentic liberation involves permanent dialogue between leaders and people, involving “maximum effort at conscientization – it should reach everyone, regardless of their path” (Freire, 1970, p. 159). Leaders must trust the people they are leading and should “consider seriously, even as they act, the reasons for any attitude of mistrust on the part of the people, and to seek out true avenues of communion with them” (Freire, 1970, p. 166). Cooperation should not be achieved by manipulation, but by communication. In dialogue, “leaders must dedicate themselves to an untiring effort for unity among the oppressed – and unity of the leaders with the oppressed – in order to achieve liberation” (Freire, 1970, p. 172). This revolutionary dialogue should include cultural synthesis, which is a method of confronting culture itself; it involves an investigation in which “leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action” (Freire, 1970, p. 181). Models are not imposed, they are created together.

Critical participation by both teacher and student is required when dialoging to promote critical literacy. Roberts (1998) writes, “Dialogue in a literacy program is not only to facilitate the acquisition of reading and writing abilities, but also to promote a critical comprehension, and transformation, of the participants’ social world” (p. 110). Although Freire valued dialogue, he did not promote a laissez-faire methodology of instruction. “Just because I reject authoritarianism, does not mean I can fall into lack of discipline, nor that rejecting lawlessness, I can resort myself to authoritarianism. As I once affirmed: one is not

the opposite of the other” (Freire, 1998b, p. 64). He preferred using terms like democratic radicalism and critical education.

Countering criticism that dialogue may lead to chaos or laissez-faire classrooms, Freire argues, “Dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally; but it does mark the democratic position between them” (Freire, 1994, p. 101). McLaren (2000a) writes:

Freire emphatically did not relegate the role of the teacher to that of ‘guide on the side’ or backstage ‘facilitator’ who moves forever sideways, slipping out of his or her responsibility to actively direct the pedagogical process. His was not a sidwinder pedagogy but rather cobra-like, moving back and forth and striking quickly when students’ conditioning was broken down enough so that alternative views could be presented . (p. 151)

Freire believed education was most effective when teacher and student engage in dialogue, rather than the one way transfer of information found in authoritarian educative practices, in which “the teacher is the subject of the learning process, and the learners are its objects; the role of the teacher is to ‘deposit’ contents in the mind of the learner” (Schugurensky, 1998, p. 18). However, the educator is still in control of the dialogue and must actively facilitate the direction and content of the dialogue, which is far from laissez-faire pedagogy. Gordon (2009) writes, “Teachers who are good facilitators are able to elicit ideas from their students and mediate classroom conversations through careful questioning strategies so that their students develop more sophisticated understandings” (p. 54). This type of pedagogy can be difficult and sometimes exhausting as it requires the educator to listen and make connections between content and student comments.

Freire emphasized that listening, by both teachers and students, is an essential skill when using dialogue as a pedagogical tool. Mayo (2001) supports Freire: “educators must stop suffering from ‘narration sickness’ and become ‘listeners’” (p. 375). If those involved in the educational process of dialoging fail to listen to other’s views, it is not dialogue. Freire was known for his unique ability to listen (Roberts & Peters, 2010). Nita Freire (1998) writes, “He transformed the act of hearing into listening” (p. 4). In *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civil Courage* (1998a), Paulo Freire wrote:

Listening is an activity that obviously goes beyond mere hearing. To listen in the context of our discussion here, is a permanent attitude on the part of the subject who is listening, of being open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other. (p. 107)

Throughout the dialogical process, teachers are urged never “to ‘apply the brakes’ to the educand’s ability to think” (Freire, 1994, p. 101). The teacher must facilitate the dialogue, which involves making connections between ideas, as well as keeping the dialogue moving in a positive direction. This is particularly difficult if the educator disagrees with a student. Nonetheless, an effective educator commits to this ongoing struggle to accept differences. Freire cautions, “dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another” (Freire, 1970, p. 89). Noguera and Cohen (2006) urge educators “not to dictate what they should think, but simply to encourage them to think” (p. 578). Critical participation by both teacher and student is required when dialoging to promote conscientization. Dialogue helps “to promote a critical comprehension, and transformation, of the participants’ social world” (Roberts, 1998, p. 110).

Important elements of effective dialogue also include humility, mutual trust, faith, hope, and love. “The naming of the world... cannot be an act of arrogance” (Freire, 1970, p. 90). Arrogance and egotism place barriers between educator and student that ultimately inhibit learning. Freire called on educators to remain humble, to remain “open up to the thinking of others, and thereby not wither away in isolation” (Freire, 1994, p. 103). Remaining open to learning is fundamental when facilitating authentic dialogue. Dialogue cannot come from a place of stubbornness or closed-mindedness.

Freire believed love is the foundation of dialogue; love is commitment to others, including commitment to others’ causes of liberation. “If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue” (Freire, 1970, p. 90). As the ultimate human force, love inspires and motivates. It is fueled by hope and shattered by hopelessness. Dialogue cannot exist “in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people” (Freire, 1970, p. 89).

From Banking to Problem-Posing Education

In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire revisited the concepts of banking and problem-posing education that he introduced in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire believed most educators suffer from “narration sickness” because they fill their students with contents of their narration, which is usually detached from reality. Narration teaching requires students to memorize mechanically. Freire believed that narration turns students into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. Freire refers to this concept as the banking concept of education, “in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and

storing the deposits” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Authoritarian classrooms are not only forms of banking education, they are anti-liberatory, and the teachers themselves are “dull, uninteresting, and treat their pupils as if they didn’t exist” (Gadotti, 1994, p. 89).

Banking is a non-reflective way of teaching and learning (Mayo, 1999). Gadotti (1994) elaborates further:

In the banking conception (bourgeois), it is the educator who knows and the pupils who don’t; it is the educator who thinks and the pupils who are “thought”; it is the educator who speaks and the pupils who quietly listen; it is the educator who makes and prescribes his choice and the pupils who follow his prescription; it is the educator who chooses the content of the program; the pupils’ ideas on the program are never heard, and they have to get used to it. The educator gives himself the authority of his function, which has the authority of knowledge, and this is antagonistic to the freedom of the pupils, who have to adapt to the determinations of the educator. Finally, the educator is the subject of the process while the pupils are mere objects. (p. 52)

Freire described banking education as mechanical, which itself is dehumanizing; it denies students opportunities for critical analysis. He argued, “Teaching is not a simple transmission, wrought by and large through a pure description of the concept of the object, to be memorized by students mechanically” (1994, p. 67). In banking education, learning is inhibited by the resulting lack of engagement of students. He depicted banking education as anti-liberatory and argued, “Teaching is a creative act, a critical act, and not a mechanical one” (1994, p. 68). Not only does it stifle students’ creativity, banking education reinforces hegemonic practices fueled by a culture of domination.

Banking education involves a one-way transfer of information from teacher to student, which by nature is oppressive. “Indeed the content... cannot simply be transferred from the educator to the educand, simply deposited in the educand by the educator” (Freire, 1994, p. 93). Chomsky (2000b) supports Freire’s call to move away from banking: “A good teacher

knows the best way to help students learn is to allow them to find the truth by themselves. Students don't learn by a mere transfer of knowledge, consumed through rote memorization and later regurgitated" (p. 21). Banking education neglects students' lived experiences and often lacks relevance, making this type of teaching anti-liberatory and incompatible with humanist education. Education can only be liberatory when student voices are a part of the pedagogical process.

Arguing against this "simple transmission of knowledge concerning the object or concerning content" found in banking education, Freire urged educators to implement problem-posing education that seeks to humanize, not dehumanize (1994, p. 68). In problem-posing education, students are encouraged to question, analyze, find relevance, and explore different perspectives while learning. Shor (1993) writes, "A Freireian class invites students to think critically about subject matter, doctrines, the learning process itself, and their society" (p. 25). Moving from banking to problem-posing education involves encouraging students to "learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions" (Shor, 1993, p. 26). It also includes helping students connect material to their lives. Referencing Freire, Gordon (2009) argues "that knowledge is attained when people come together to exchange ideas, articulate their problems from their own perspectives, and construct meanings that make sense to them" (p. 53). Relevance in Freireian pedagogy cannot be overstated; a fundamental objective is to connect "the students learning to their lived context, which makes education relevant, interesting, and vital for students" (Camarota, 2011, p. 839).

Problem-posing education involves a collective effort on the part of teachers and students. Ayers (2004) writes of Freire and Myles Horton:

They opposed the notion that teaching involves making small deposits into inert little banks. (Their) pedagogy began with the people coming together to name their problems and to collectively seek and organize the solutions. The content arose from the participants themselves, and solutions were sought through dialogue and reflective action. (p. 2)

Multidirectional learning is an essential element of problem-posing education. Freire (1970) wrote, “the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught, also teach” (p. 80). It is transformative and liberatory. Problem-posing education can be considered “education as the practice of freedom. . . .It denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 81). In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire explained:

The real evil is not in the expository lesson – in the explanation given by the teacher. This is not what I have criticized as a kind of “banking.” I have criticized, and continue to criticize, that type of educator-educand relationship in which the educator regards himself or herself as the educand’s sole educator – in which the educator violates, or refuses to accept, the fundamental condition of the act of knowing, which is its dialogical relation, and therefore establishes a relation in which the educator transfers knowledge about *a* or *b* or *c* objects or elements of content to an educand considered as pure recipient. (p. 102)

Gordon (2009) supports Freire, claiming, “Genuine knowledge comes when students are actively engaged in the learning process” (p. 53), indicating that when students are viewed as pure recipients, rather than active participants, learning is inhibited.

Freire encouraged educators to empower students to reject the banking style of education. Consistent with Freireian thought, all persons are held responsible in the process of education as the practice of freedom. Freire (1994) claimed, “Educands need to become educands by assuming themselves, taking themselves as cognizing subjects, and not as an object upon which the discourse of the educator impinges” (p. 37); however, he argued it is

the responsibility of the educator to develop a love for the content, regardless of whether the educators or the students created it:

It is that very teacher who, in conducting a course, adopts a relationship with the subject, with the content, of which she or he is treating, that is one of profound, affectionate, almost loving respect, whether that content be constituted of a text composed by the teacher or a text composed by someone else .(pp. 102-103)

Participatory in nature, problem-posing education cannot exist without dialogue (Morrow & Torres, 2002). It “regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality” (Freire, 1970, p. 83). In fact, in problem-posing education, dialogue is mandatory, not optional; the relevance of the material is so crucial an educator must dialogue with students to know what to teach as well as what language to use to ensure pedagogical relevance for the students. Without dialogue, the only transfer of knowledge is from teacher to student.

From Cultural Invasion to Cultural Pluralism

Freire presented various theories of cultural action that stem from anti-dialogical and dialogical matrices. He argued that cultural invasion is a consequence of anti-dialogical education, whereby oppressors “impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression” (Freire, 1970, p. 152). This type of invasion deems the invaded culture inauthentic, resulting in an inferiority complex of those oppressed. Many oppressed become afraid of freedom, and the cultural inferiority complex often prohibits engagement in humanizing action. Mayo (1999) writes, “The learner becomes vulnerable to ideas imposed from above (ideas related to the dominant

culture)” (p. 59). Furthermore, Freire believed that “the phenomenon of cultural invasion worldwide was fundamentally driven by the profit motives of capitalists” (Darder, 2002, p. 39).

Rather than cultural invasion, Freire (1994) urged educators to move society toward cultural pluralism, which “consists in the realization of freedom, in the guaranteed right of each culture to move in mutual respect, each one freely running the risk of being different, fearless of being different, each culture being ‘for itself’ (p. 136). He did not advocate sameness, rather a respect for differences. Acceptance of different cultures is integral when socially constructing a multicultural society, which Freire (1994) described as an “historical creation, involving decision, political determination, mobilization, and organization, on the part of each cultural group, in view of common purposes....It calls for a new ethics founded on respect for differences” (p. 137). Cultural pluralism takes great effort; it is not a natural human phenomenon. Absent social construction, cultures would not naturally gravitate together. Freire (1994) claimed, “No multi-culturality arises spontaneously. A multi-culturality must be created, politically produced, worked on, in the sweat of one’s brow, in concrete history” (p. 137).

Freire called for oneness in difference, which is the philosophy that all people belong to the human race and should strive for mutual humanization without losing our individual ethnic, racial, and cultural identities; humans work together to understand and celebrate each other’s differences (Freire, 1994). He argued that oneness in difference is “the only effective response of those forbidden to be, those prevented from living, to the ancient rule of the mighty: divide and conquer” (1994, p. 130). Freire continued, “The very quest for this

oneness in difference, the struggle for it as a process, in and of itself is the beginning of a creation of multiculturalism” (p. 137).

Freire (1994) spoke of a necessary tension between cultures and urged educators to embrace this tension, with a shared goal of mutual humanization:

The needed on-going tension, among cultures in a cultural pluralism, is of a different nature. The tension that is needed is the tension to which the various cultures expose themselves by being different, in a democratic relationship in which they strive for advancement. . . .The tension in this case, therefore, is that of the “unfinishedness” that each culture accepts. (p. 136)

Freire (1994) argued that ongoing tension is necessary to keep the cultures progressing by motivating people to continue working for justice.

When the oppressed become critically aware of the social construction of discrimination among oppressed groups, they can strive to humanize the so-called enemy. Marginalized groups can begin the process of liberation by working together to understand and celebrate each other’s differences, which are often far fewer than most believe. Freire (1994) wrote,

Without unity in diversity, the so-called minorities could not even struggle, in the United States, for the most basic rights, let alone overcome the barriers that keep them from “being themselves,” from being “minorities for themselves,” with one another and not against one another. (p. 130)

The effort to live in cultural pluralism must be continuous, which was a vital message in *Pedagogy of Hope*. Freire (1994) cautioned, “The total victory of the revolution in the present does not guarantee its existence in the future. A revolution can perish at the very height of its power” (p. 175). If people become too complacent, efforts to live in cultural pluralism fade, and racism and injustice return.

Relevancy in the United States

In the following sections, I present examples of hegemony and oppression, dehumanization, cultural invasion, false neutrality, and discrimination that I use to strengthen my argument for the relevancy of Freire's work to North American social justice education. Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) argue that people around the world, including in the United States, struggle with oppression. The scholars argue that "capitalism exploits people's labor in almost every country," European colonialism was "intended to culturally and economically dominate the entire world," that "White supremacy identifies all people of color as inferior," and that "patriarchy renders woman subordinate to men in almost every culture in existence" (p. 90). The challenge for social justice educators in the United States is to convince students that the United States struggles with forms of oppression as well. In the United States, most students belonging to a marginalized group acknowledge oppression exists because they have experienced it; some in the dominant group do not believe oppression exists and need to be provided evidence or data, as well as opportunities to hear stories from other students experiencing oppression for them to become critically aware that oppression exists.

Hegemony and Oppression: Wealth Distribution

Freire's theory of authentic liberation, whereby the oppressed must liberate themselves by freeing themselves from the oppressor, is irrelevant if students do not believe people are oppressed in the United States. Helping students become critically aware that hegemonic

policies have led to massive disparities in wealth is a fundamental start when addressing issues of economic injustice.

The trends in wealth distribution in the United States are evidence that hegemonic policies are creating oppressive situation for many North Americans. While the top 20% continues to grow their wealth at alarming rates, the bottom 80% have stayed stagnant or lost wealth. The United States has not had such disparities in wealth distribution since the Great Depression in the 1920s (Davies, Sandstrom, Shorrocks, & Wolff, 2009; Keister, 2000; Wolff, 2002). Students in higher education are often unaware of the economic disparities that exist. In addition, the perception of many Americans of income distribution is far from reality.

Norton and Ariely (2011) conclude that “Respondents dramatically underestimated the current level of wealth inequality” (p. 9). Furthermore, “All demographic groups – even those not usually associated with wealth distribution such as Republicans and the wealthy – desired a more equal distribution of wealth than the status quo” (Norton & Ariely, 2011, p. 9). When students become critically aware that the disparities in wealth have resulted from hegemonic policies that favor the wealthy at the expense of the rest of the populous, they may refuse to tolerate the injustices by getting active in their own struggle for liberation.

Dehumanization and Oppression: Mass Incarceration

The most glaring form of dehumanization in the United States is found behind prison walls. The United States incarcerates more people per capita than any country in the world. While we currently have 5% of the world’s general population, we house 25% of the world’s prison population (Loury, 2007). The judicial system is classist and racist. People incarcerated

in the United States are disproportionately Black, brown or poor. Gopnik (2012) writes, “There are more black men in the grip of the criminal justice system – in prison, on probation, or on parole – than were in slavery” (p. 1). In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan followed Richard Nixon’s lead and declared a war on drugs and a war on crime that “ushered in a public assault on Black youth and their communities” (p. 5). For the same drug offenses, Blacks are sent to prison 48 times more often than Whites (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) claim, “Youth of color bear the brunt of discriminatory sentencing practices, and they have few educational and economic opportunities” (p. 83).

However, it is not only Black and brown people suffering dehumanization under the current United States judicial system; poor Whites also suffer disproportionately than their White middle- and upper-class counterparts. Reiman (2007) asserts:

The system is biased against the poor at every stage... for the same crimes, the poor are more likely than the well-off to get arrested and, if arrested, more likely more to be charged and if charged, more likely to be convicted and, if convicted, more likely to be sent to prison and, if sentenced to prison, more likely to receive a long sentence. (p. xiii)

Hegemonic criminal justice policies are destabilizing and debilitating poor and non-White communities throughout the United States. The racist and classist nature of implementing these policies threatens aspirations of equality, freedom, and justice for all Americans.

The consequences of racial profiling, inadequate legal representation, and harsh sentencing laws have social and economic implications for the entire country. Furthermore, Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera (2005) argue that “harsher sentencing policies have had a disproportionate impact on urban youth of color” (p. 26). We spend more on mass incarceration in this country than on education. Public tax dollars pay for the multibillion

dollar prison industry; it costs up to \$50,000 a year per inmate in prison. Furthermore, families are destabilized when members are sentenced to prison and often need public assistance paid for with tax dollars. In addition, the resulting disenfranchisement of many Americans may lead to social unrest and consequent violence.

The prison system rarely rehabilitates prisoners; in fact, prisoners argue they learn to be better criminals in prison. Once released, it is almost impossible to succeed without falling back into criminal behavior because the laws inhibit ex-convicts from participating in the social safety nets and political processes in the United States. They are often marginalized by society for life. Regarding the ensuing social and economic marginalization of convicted felons once they are released from prison, Alexander (2010) writes:

An extraordinary percentage of Black men in the United States are legally barred from voting....They are also subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents once were. (pp. 1-2)

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, known as the Welfare Reform Act, includes legislation that bars states from providing cash assistance and food stamps to any person convicted of a drug-related felony after 1996. This law permanently bans drug felons from access to public assistance unless a state passes specific legislation amending the Welfare Reform Act (United States Congress, 1996). In 12 states, convicted felons may be permanently banned from voting. Uggen, Shannon and Manza (2012) argue,

The United States is one of the world's strictest nations when it comes to denying the right to vote to citizens convicted of crimes. A remarkable 5.85 million Americans are forbidden to vote because of "felon disenfranchisement," or laws restricting voting rights for those convicted of felony-level crimes. (p. 1)

The rate of voter disenfranchisement for African Americans is four times that of non-African Americans. Uggen, Shannon, and Manza (2012) continue, “It is clear that disparities in criminal justice system are linked to disparities in political representation” (p. 15).

People with felony convictions are often prohibited from serving on juries, excluding them from the democratic process even further. It is estimated that “13 million people, including 30% of Black men, are banned for life from jury service because they are felons” (Kalt, 2003). In the United States, 48 states permanently ban or restrict felons from serving on juries, which is “creating a class of citizens defined and punished by the criminal justice system but unable to impact its function” (Binnall, 2010, p. 533).

Banning convicted felons from voting and serving on juries is a form of dehumanization that stigmatizes, marginalizes, and consequently oppresses people of color disproportionately; the current exclusion of people convicted of felonies from the democratic process threatens the validity of a government represented by the people. It forces “those with a criminal record to watch democracy move forward without ever influencing its direction” (Binnall, 2010, p. 534), which supports Alexander’s claim that mass incarceration and the ensuing injustices for felons has resulted in many of the same oppressive practices of the Jim Crow era.

The devastating consequences of mass incarceration include dehumanizing many non-Whites, especially Black men, and have destroyed families across North America. The media has contributed to racist attitudes, both external and internal, by defining criminals as Black

men, which has led to condemnation of many African American communities. Alexander (2010) argues,

The shame and stigma of the “prison label” is, in many respects, more damaging to the African American community than the shame and stigma associated with Jim Crow. The criminalization and demonization of Black men has turned the Black community against itself, unraveling community and family relationships, decimating networks of mutual support, and intensifying the shame and self-hate experiences by the current pariah caste. (p. 17)

Ginwright (2010) supports Alexander’s claim and links the criminalization of Black men to increased urban violence: “The internal oppression (shame and hatred of blackness) created by external marginalization (colonialism, structural racism, and poverty) seemed to me a powerful explanation of the rise of black youth violence in urban American” (p. 6).

It is possible that the legislation that causes incarceration disparities is not intentional, supporting Freire’s argument that some oppressors are not even aware they are oppressing. However, Alexander (2010) argues “Mass incarceration in the United States had, in fact, emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow” (p. 4). Furthermore, Alexander claims the policies of “the drug war” were designed to intentionally oppress blacks in America. While studies indicate that all racial groups use, abuse, and distribute illegal drugs at the same rates, Black and brown people are arrested, charged, and sentenced at far higher rates than their White counterparts (Alexander, 2010). Her argument clearly supports the relevancy of Freire’s theory on oppression; hegemonic incarceration policies create oppressive situations in poor, Black and brown communities throughout the United States.

Dehumanization and Cultural Invasion: Arizona

The United States has a long history of dehumanizing minorities and poor people. Native Americans were thought of as savages needed to be civilized. Blacks were thought of as 3/5 of a person. Japanese were locked up in internment camps for years. Muslims are currently suspected of being terrorists. Poor people are thought of as a burden. Black single mothers are called Welfare Queens. Currently, the trend targets undocumented workers.

Arizona Senate Bill 1070, officially titled Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, was passed in 2011 and is a current example of dehumanization in the United States. The bill encourages law enforcement to demand documentation from any citizen suspected of being in the country illegally. Latinos living in the United States, both legally and illegally are being arrested if they fail to provide legal documentation. As a result, Arizona is currently arresting Latinos and Latino Americans at unprecedented rates. Tolerance of this injustice is easier when non-Whites are viewed as less than human. In addition, the term “illegal alien” is used in Arizona SB 1070 to describe undocumented workers, further dehumanizing groups of people living in the United States.

The dehumanization of non-Whites in Arizona has also permeated education in the form of cultural invasion. In 2009, the Arizona State Board of Education launched a campaign to abolish the Ethnic Studies Program, also known as Raza Studies, in the Tucson School District. Eren Isabel produced a documentary titled *Precious Knowledge* (McGinnis & Palos, 2011) detailing the assault. The main argument by the state school board was that the program was anti-American because it encouraged high school students to be proud of their ethnic

heritage. Opponents of the Raza Studies Program argued that the teachers were advocating an overthrow of the U.S. government because one of the textbooks they used was Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). After two failed house bill attempts, Arizona House Bill 2281 (2010) passed, abolishing the program. The following language is found in the Arizona House Bill 2281:

A school district or charter school in this state shall not include in its program of instruction any course or classes that include any of the following: 1) Promote the overthrow of the United States government. 2) Promote resentment toward a race or class of people. 3) Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group. 4) Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals. (p.1)

The abolition of the Raza Studies Program in Tucson was a direct result of cultural invasion by European Americans in Arizona. The state superintendent argued that pride in one's ethnicity was counterproductive to the American way of life and that students should be learning American history, not Mexican or Latino American history (McGinnis & Palos, 2011). His argument seemed to be that the White European colonialist's version of history, accurate or not, inclusive or not, is what all North Americans should ascribe to. The Raza Studies Program included accounts of history from a Latino perspective. The teachers advocated for social justice and spent time helping students become critically aware of the historic oppression of non-Whites in the United States. At one point in the documentary, the state superintendent stated that you cannot teach students about oppression in this country because it implies that there is an oppressor. Consequently, the cultural invasion was accompanied by the denial of oppression.

Shortly after Arizona House Bill 2281 passed, the Arizona State Board of Education abolished the use of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) in public schools. The

argument was that the book brainwashed students into thinking they were oppressed and encouraged a violent overthrow of the government. Clearly, the Arizona administrators did not read Freire's book, or if they did, they did not understand it. Freire does not advocate a violent overthrow of the government, rather liberation through revolutionary praxis and dialogue.

False Neutrality: Textbooks and Fox News

False neutrality can be found in many North American textbooks. Students are trained early in their K-12 experiences to read textbooks as though they are factual and complete, without regard to who wrote or published the textbook. There is a common belief that information presented in textbooks is always neutral and accurate. Furthermore, if the teacher teaches straight from the textbook, that teacher is deemed neutral and accurate. In the United States, this neutrality is widely valued in education by the dominant culture. However, Giroux (1990) argues, "The curriculum along with its representative courses, texts, and social relations is never value-free or objective" (p. 88).

A clear example of false neutrality is when students indicate that Christopher Columbus discovered America, and worse, when they hold his legacy in high esteem. Morrell (2008) urges educators and students to critically analyze and question "the ideas, concepts, and ideologies that are presented to us as fact" (p. 38). Authors of U.S. history books choose what pieces of history to teach and what pieces not to teach. This method of teaching history is not neutral. Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2005) dispels many of the myths and exclusions of traditional U.S. history textbooks by providing an alternative

discourse to the dominate European American perspective, including views from Native Americans.

Oliver Stone, Tara Tremain, and Rob Wilson (2012) recently released a documentary series on Showtime titled *The Untold History of the United States* in which they present positions other than those from the dominant groups typically found in U.S. history textbooks. For example, when describing World War II, Stone et al. include perspectives from the Soviet Union that are mostly omitted from North American curriculum. Stone et al. back all of their claims with research, including direct quotes from people involved in the various historical events. For example, when presenting information about the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, U.S. history books often omit information that the Japanese had been trying to surrender for months prior to the bombings. Furthermore, President Truman told the American people that the bombs were dropped on military bases, when in fact, they were both dropped on civilian cities.

In *Literacies of Power: What Americans are not Allowed to Know*, Macedo (2006) presents his readers with ample evidence of his argument that “Equality, liberty and justice for all is replete with inequality and injustice for those groups of people who are from different racial, class, and ethnic backgrounds” (p. 13). Macedo (2006) describes Chomsky’s (1988) claim that our current education system is about indoctrination and obedience, which

is imposed not only through received false cultural information but also through the omission of cultural facts, such as the horrendous crimes that have been committed against humanity in the name of Western heritage, in order to prevent the possibility of keeping dangerous memories alive. (p. 67)

Macedo outlines common terms and concepts presented in U.S. history textbooks under the heading “What every American needs to know,” followed with an expanded explanation under the heading “What Americans are not allowed to know” (pp. 70-85). Macedo (2006) argues teacher education in the United States is a “pedagogy of lies” and that students “have invested in a system that rewards them for reproducing and not questioning dominant mechanisms designed to produce power asymmetries along the lines of race, gender, class, culture, and ethnicity” (p. 12). This type of banking education that dehumanizes non-Whites is clearly not neutral; it is a hegemonic instrument used by the dominant class to maintain and enhance their position of power in society.

Many in power manipulate the masses with misinformation aimed at turning us against each other, while claiming to be neutral. One of the most dangerous examples of false neutrality is Rupert Murdoch’s anti-dialogical Fox News channel, which implies neutrality with their slogan “Fair and Balanced.” McLaren (2006) criticizes the lack of critical questioning and common sense of Americans regarding the Iraq war, attributing much ignorance to information presented by “slick Republican propagandists masquerading as Fox News reporters” (p. xviii). A study conducted by faculty at Fairleigh Dickinson University concluded that people who get their information solely from watching Fox News are more misinformed than people who do not watch cable news at all (Cassino, Woolley, & Jenkins, 2012). Fox News may be the most dangerous misinformation dissemination force in the United States because promoting hatred and fear of President Obama and anyone who supports him seems to be a primary objective of the organization, while simultaneously claiming to be fair and balanced. The oppressors, in this case Fox News, have demonized

people with liberal philosophies, attempting to turn people in the United States against each other. When people in the United States are consumed with fighting each other, they are unable to focus attention on the hegemonic policies of the oppressors.

Racism: An Illusion of Progress

Dehumanization can lead to discrimination based on race. Giroux (2003) claims, “A majority of Americans now believe that anti-Black racism is a thing of the past, since it is assumed that formal institutions of segregation no longer exist” (p. 192). Alexander (2010) argues the election of Barack Obama, as well as the advancement of other minorities in universities and positions of power, creates an illusion that progress has been made, when in reality, not much progress has occurred for non-Whites, specifically Blacks, since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Other academics support Alexander’s claim. Duncan-Andrade (2009) writes:

The significance of the election of a black man as the president of this country is undeniable, especially given our past and present national failure to meet the challenge of racial equality. But immediately after the election that few would have predicted, the overstatement of its significance began; it became naturalized as the consequence of a fictitious color-blind society. (p. 183)

This fictitious color-blind society Duncan-Andrade writes about is reinforced by mainstream media. Darder (2002) poses the argument that the media presents a false reality of multiculturalism “to create the illusion that there truly exists greater acceptance of diversity and difference and increasing social freedom and equality” (p. 19).

This assumption that racism is no longer a significant social justice issue is also rejected by Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) when they cite Poussaint and Alexander (2000)

and found that “racist police violence, racial discrimination in employment, and unfair and racist public school practices resulted in unresolved rage, aggression, depression, and fatalism” (p. 86). In an interview with Bill Moyers (2010), Bryan Stevenson argues that the United States has not engaged in truth and reconciliation regarding the historical oppression and enslavement of African Americans. As a result, tensions continue between Whites and non-Whites as the country grapples with embracing or rejecting white supremacy. Needless to say, historical and social unequal power relations in the United States, absent authentic reconciliation, seem to have detrimental, lasting effects long after the abolition of slavery.

Poussaint and Alexander (2000) argue:

The impact of racism itself, independent of poverty, still appears to exact a toll on the minds and bodies of the descendants of men and women brought to this continent as slaves, straining their capacity to adapt successfully in America....Racism has contributed to high rates of stress-related illnesses in the black community. (p. 86)

Furthermore, Macedo (2006) argues that race trumps class and education regarding discrimination. He discusses Cornel West’s book *Race Matters* (1993b) recounting West’s experiences of having difficulties flagging down a taxi as well as being pulled over by the police three times during his first week at Princeton University. Macedo (2006) writes:

We can only conclude that no matter who you are and what position you hold in our society, if you are non-white you are often reduced to the status of half-citizen to the degree that you are not allowed to automatically and equally participate civically in all aspects of life. (p. 47)

It is clear that race does matter, and that the election of Barack Obama creates an illusion of progress regarding race relations, racial identity and racial politics.

Sexism: Unequal Pay and Degradation of Women

Sexism continues to have detrimental effects on girls and women in the United States. One area of sexism involves the issue of equal pay for men and women. Currently, women make 77 cents for every dollar a man makes for doing the same job (United States Department of Labor, 2011). In 2009, Congress passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which ensures that women have the right to sue their employers if their discriminatory pay continues. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was drafted in response to the “Supreme Court decision that denied Ledbetter redress for decades of unequal pay at an Alabama Goodyear plant — which she discovered only after an anonymous tip” (DeLauro & Ledbetter, 2012).

Sexism can also be found in media where women are often depicted as sex objects. A classic example is how women are depicted in hip-hop and rap music videos, which often degrade a woman’s purpose as being subservient to men. In the media, a woman’s body is often portrayed as more valuable than her mind and spirit. Many messages young girls get from the media is that the most important aspect of womanhood is appearance and sexuality. The language used in many rap songs is demeaning, referring to woman as “bitches” and “ho’s.” Freire addresses the media in a dialogue with Sergio Guimaraes, stating, “I make a general analysis of commercials and I immediately find in them the class, sex, and racial division” (as cited in Gadotti, 1994, p. 78). While progress has been made, more work needs to be done to address unequal pay for women and other forms of sexism.

In this chapter, I described Paulo Freire’s history and philosophy of education, which may help the reader understand his work better. I presented the ideas and theories derived

from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) that I believe are relevant to North American higher education. Finally, I provided specific examples of these ideas and theories currently found in the United States to strengthen my argument that Freire's work is not only relevant but important to consider when teaching for social change. In the following chapter, I present the research method used for this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

“Through autoethnography, I can retell my story, reflect upon it, and make meaning to move the profession forward.” (Quinn, 2008, p. 20)

The decision to write an autoethnography about Freire’s pedagogy of hope not only transformed me personally, but it made me even more passionate about carrying on Freire’s legacy. I became more confident with my practice, began presenting Freire’s ideas at conferences, and guest speaking in other educational philosophy and sociology courses. As the years progressed, I felt I became more and more Freireian. My student evaluations were outstanding. I knew I was effectively teaching and implementing Freire’s ideas in my classroom, at conferences, and in others’ classrooms. However, every semester I have some students openly resist my pedagogy. I have struggled to understand this resistance, especially when I seem to seriously anger some students, while others indicate I am “the best teacher they ever had.” Writing an autoethnography may help me understand this resistance and, ultimately, may help me learn better methods of handling it. In addition, this study may assist other social justice educators aspiring to incorporate Freire’s ideas in their classrooms.

Consistent with autoethnography, much of the data collected in this dissertation are from my personal experiences learning about and implementing Freire’s ideas and theories; I write from my perspective as a social justice educator at a Midwestern university. As an

autoethnographic study, I am the main participant, and it is through my lens that the stories in this dissertation are told. However, other people in Brazil and the United States play integral roles in my experiences and impact my perspective. They include graduate and undergraduate students, instructors, professors, community workers, and my dialogue partner. With the exception of data pertaining to Class Z (2008-2012), all data collected for this study are from the same academic year (2010-2011).

The research method, data collection, data coding and theming, and data analysis process used for this study are presented in this chapter. I begin with an overview of autoethnography and describe how I specifically use the method. I include the limitations of using autoethnography as a research method and discuss how I address these limitations. I then detail how I gather, code, theme, and analyze data.

Research Questions

- 1 How have my experiences with Freireian pedagogy infused my educational practices as an instructor of higher education students?
- 2 How do my undergraduate college students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire's concepts?
- 3 How can an analysis of student resistance to my implementation of Freire's ideas and theories help me develop a more inclusive pedagogy?
- 4 What can be learned from a dialogue with another self-identified Freireian educator of undergraduate students?

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that involves a personal narrative of the researcher's lived experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2003). In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks writes about how her philosophy of engaged pedagogy was influenced by Freire. This educational work is written in story form with honest accounts of hooks's struggles as a southern black woman in the North American educational system, as well as in society as a whole. She connects her personal life story and cultural experiences to the development of her current educational philosophy. Ellis and Bochner (2003) claim autoethnography is "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 209). hooks's stories are powerful and inspirational. This dissertation includes narratives of my personal life experiences researching and implementing Freire's pedagogy of hope; I describe personal connections to the cultural experiences that have impacted me.

Over the past three decades, autoethnography has evolved into an acceptable form of academic research because it is a method that provides opportunities to find meaning in the researcher's lived experiences. Ellis and Bochner (2003) claim, "I see ample evidence of a burgeoning interest among diverse fields of social science in the genres of personal narrative and autoethnography" (p. 218). As a result of the search for meaning, autoethnography provides researchers with opportunities for personal and professional growth. hooks (1994) writes extensively on the importance of teachers actively seeking self-discovery, arguing, "Professors who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create

pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply” (p. 22). Autoethnography is a method that promotes hook’s commitment to self-actualization, or having a sense of purpose. Ellis and Bochner (2003) put the point in similar terms: “You come to understand yourself in deeper ways. And with understanding yourself comes understanding others. Autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world” (p. 207). This dissertation is a reflective narrative of my experiences researching and implementing Freire’s ideas and theories and helps me articulate and find meaning in my pedagogy.

The dissertation titled *Autoethnography: My Journey from Educator to Educator-Activist* by Melanie Lane Quinn (2008), in particular, strongly supports my research project. Quinn (2008) claims, “Through autoethnography I can retell my story, reflect upon it, and make meaning to move the profession forward” (p. 20). Quinn’s autoethnographic dissertation is the story of her journey of becoming an educator-activist from the perspective of a teacher educator of literacy education. My story is about incorporating Freire’s pedagogical ideas and theories to educate for liberation from the perspective of a social justice educator. Consistent with my study, Quinn (2008) presents “key components that appear to support success in activism against current and future harmful education policies” (p. iii); I present recommendations for implementing Freire’s ideas and theories to teach for social change. Freire’s focus on praxis (reflection and action) in liberatory education supports Quinn’s (2008) argument to use education for activism. Clearly, our studies are not identical. However, our purpose for using autoethnography as a research method is similar. Quinn (2008) writes,

Rather than having my research as a formal requirement separate from my passionate involvement in the profession, through autoethnography I could live my passion as an educator activist and use my story as a vehicle to understand the journey I was on and the impact it might have on others. (p.4)

I agree with Quinn that being able to “live my passion” in this dissertation helps me conduct this research project by adding meaning and depth to my study, which may not be there if I chose a method separate from my personal and professional social justice mission.

Autoethnography is consistent with Freire’s compassion for others. Freire had a deep respect for people who are marginalized. He devoted his life to minimizing oppression through literacy and critical awareness. He did not separate compassion, love, and education.

Ellis and Bochner (2003) write about autoethnography:

The goal is to encourage compassion and promote dialogue...a search for better conversation in the face of all the barriers and boundaries that make conversation difficult. The stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as with our readers. (p. 224)

I say to students, “I cannot make you care about justice. I cannot force you to have compassion for people who are less fortunate, but I will model compassion and love of humanity with the hope that when you leave our class, you will be a little more compassionate and loving toward others.” Autoethnography provides an opportunity for me to articulate my compassion and love of humanity by writing my story of how my compassion permeates my pedagogy.

The power of storytelling is evident throughout Freire’s work (Mayo, 2001). He writes about real-life examples of transforming education and society. This moves educational change from theory to reality. Freire accounts his own experiences in *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1994):

My concern, in this hopeful work, as I have demonstrated to this point, is to stir my memory and challenge it, like an excavation in time, so that I can show you the actual process of my reflection, my pedagogical thought and its development, of which the book is a step – just as my pedagogical thinking is actually developing right in this *Pedagogy of Hope*, as I discuss the hope with which I wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (p.53)

Pedagogy of Hope (1994) is an authentic story of Freire reflecting on the 20 years following the writing of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). He included stories of how his liberatory pedagogy impacted people around the world. Freire's stories of his life experiences teaching others about his ideas provide insight into his commitment to justice. Lopate (1975) argues:

Whatever causes, the power of stories about educational experiences needs to be recognized and utilized. Attention needs to be paid to the recording of these stories and to interpreting them. Such interpretation - of one's own stories and the stories of others - can provide insight into specific educational events and circumstances and can also lead to a deeper understanding of critical issues and values in the broader arena of education practice. (p. 32)

Freire wrote extensively on the importance of relevance in education. Telling stories is one of the most effective methods of helping others find relevance in any educational endeavor. Relevance is grounded in the lived experiences of educators and students. Not only did Freire (1970) encourage the inclusion of educators' and students' personal stories in practice, he claimed it essential for authentic liberatory education. Shank (2002) references Ellis, stating,

By bringing her personal and reflective perspective into her work, she attempts to show us how the setting and the events impact on real lives. We cannot know those real impacts, auto-ethnographers argue, unless we know them from the view of those who are involved, in their own words. (p. 60)

Teachers striving for pedagogical relevance must not only tell their stories, but provide opportunities for students to tell their stories as well. My story of how Freire has impacted my pedagogy may be relevant to social justice education.

Freire believed that the place to start when searching for remedies to injustice was with the people themselves. He claimed we could not gain a true understanding of the problems the oppressed face unless we listened to their stories first. Social justice education involves an ongoing struggle against oppressive forces that sometimes feel unbeatable. Writing the story of my commitment to social justice education provides a real-life example of the difficulties educators face when attempting to educate for social change.

During the 2012 fall academic semester, I presented at the Northern Illinois University Student Education Association of future teachers. The talk was titled, “Be the Teacher Students Remember.” I started by asking the students to reflect on a teacher that they remembered and to write down the reasons they remembered that particular teacher. We then shared our experiences. The very first student said, “I loved this teacher because she told stories.” Most of the students who shared the characteristics of the teacher they remembered claimed that the teacher told stories. I understand that the pedagogical practice of telling stories, in itself, does not indicate effective pedagogy. However, I argue educators who are committed to social justice tell stories and create classroom environments that provide space and time for students to tell their stories.

The power of academics writing their stories is often underestimated. Quinn (2008) encourages other academics to conduct autoethnographic research arguing, “We will need many more stories of more teacher activists doing autoethnographies” (p. 24). Each

educator's story is different, and particular stories may resonate with one reader, but not another, which is why more educational autoethnographies are needed. Quinn continues, "Ultimately the more we have, the greater impact we can have on a larger population of teachers who may not recognize their story in my story but might see it in others" (p. 24). Autoethnography can be a powerful research method because it provides opportunities to connect the research to lived experiences, which in turn strengthens the relevance of the material and provides opportunities for personal and professional transformation and growth.

Limitations of Autoethnography

In autoethnography, "social scientists take on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experience in daily life," (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p. 211). I often claim I was born to teach. I do not punch in and punch out when I work, rather, my personal and professional lives are one. In essence, I do not struggle with dual identities. I am an educator, and merging my professional and personal life has helped me stay true to who I am and true to my social justice mission. It helps me connect with students on a level that is profound and meaningful. As a result, writing an autoethnography is an appropriate research method for me to use.

Atkinson (1997) claims autoethnography ordains "a romantic construction of the self." While social justice education might be seen as idealistic or romantic, I firmly defend the active pursuit of self-discovery as essential for teaching for social change. Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2000) argue:

Having witnessed the Right-wing assault on education, health care, welfare, and immigration in this country, we have become more convinced, not less, that progressive activists and researchers need to interrogate with deliberation – not camouflage with romance – some of the rough spots in our work. (pp. 125-126)

As an educator examining my own pedagogy, there is flavor of a romantic construction. The intent is to set the stage for helping me understand why I connect with most students, yet seem to anger others. While I experience success in the classroom, I also struggle with intense student resistance. I include harsh criticism that exposes flaws in my pedagogy. There is nothing romantic about shining a light on my weaknesses as a teacher. Consequently, this is not a romantic construction in a negative sense, rather a path toward self-improvement and enhanced pedagogy, with the hope that my story of how Freire has impacted me will inspire others.

Ellis and Bochner (2003) warn researchers of the personal and ethical demands of autoethnography, arguing “Honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and doubts – and emotional pain” (p. 207). She has many conversations with a doctoral student named Sylvia, and during moments of Sylvia’s vulnerability, Dr. Ellis would question Sylvia’s strength and determination for self-disclosure of her vulnerabilities. Ellis and Bochner (2003) continue, “In conversation with ourselves, we expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices, and values” (p. 224). Writing my personal story is empowering, yet sometimes debilitating. The autoethnographic process takes time, and in my case, years. My personal life has been fulfilling at times and deeply painful at other times, where I seriously question my capacity to love or even continue living. I noticed during difficult emotional times, I struggled to work on

my dissertation because the process required me to reflect on my life, including my perceived inadequacies; sometimes it is just too painful of an undertaking.

Ellis and Bochner (2003) caution, “It’s not easy being vulnerable, especially in the academy, where you’re expected to be in control and keep your private life removed from your professional life” (p. 236). Fortunately, I have been teaching at the same university for almost ten years. I have a reputation for unique, progressive, and exciting pedagogy. I am known for truly loving my students as well as my pedagogy. I feel respected by most of the staff and faculty in my department and college. It took years of actively participating in college events, receiving positive student evaluations, and getting involved with the community to build this positive reputation of being a different kind of educator. In the classroom, I merge my private and professional life as I tell personal stories that connect to the content I am teaching.

I am confident, yet humble, constantly taking risks and trying to improve my pedagogy. Ellis and Bochner (2003) claim, “personal narrative is part of the human, existential struggle to move life forward” (p. 221). If I was new to the academy and had not spent years earning a positive reputation as an educator, I may not be comfortable writing an autoethnography. However, I now accept my uniqueness as a person and an educator; in this dissertation, I am open and honest about my experiences, including my inadequacies during these experiences, on my journey of carrying on Freire’s legacy. Autoethnography provides an opportunity for me to articulate my strengths and weakness as a teacher committed to social justice. I view this research as integral to my mission of moving society in a more just, civil, and loving direction.

Data Collection: Students

The data I collected to address how my undergraduate college students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire's concepts include a course syllabus, course assignments, my personal journal, student course summaries, and student personal reflections from the 2010-2011 academic year. I teach a general education course, and the majority of my students are traditional college-aged students ranging from 18 to 23 years old. The classes I teach each have 30 to 35 students in them, and approximately two or three students per class are nontraditional, ranging in ages from 25 to 50 years old. The university recruits from the inner city as well as the middle-class suburbs of Chicago and the rural farmlands of Illinois. Students come from both blue-collar and white-collar families. Approximately 10% of my students are first-generation college students.

The student population at the university where I teach has become increasingly diverse racially and ethnically in the past ten years. I have about 120 students per semester and 60 students during the summer session. A typical class is comprised of 50-75% White students, 20-25% Black students, 5-10% Latino students, and 5-10% multiracial students. I usually have two or three Asian American students and two or three students from other countries per semester. For this study, I collected data from three classes, as well as data from extreme cases of students I have had in class over the past four years. I chose two typical classes, which I call Class A and Class B. In my attempt to understand student resistance, I chose to analyze an atypical class with at least one student resister, as well as what I perceived as a larger than usual number of politically and socially conservative White males and females. I

base this assessment on student comments in class discussions and in written assignments. I call this atypical class, Class C. Student data from extreme cases are categorized as Class Z.

In Class A, 33 students were enrolled: five freshmen, six sophomores, eight juniors, and fourteen seniors. The racial and gender make-up for Class A is as follows: four Black females, six Black males, one Asian American female, two Asian American males, one Latina American female, four White females, and fifteen White males. In Class B, 26 students were enrolled: three freshmen, six sophomores, six juniors, and eleven seniors. The racial and gender make-up for Class B is as follows: four Black females, five Black males, one Asian American female, one Latino male, one Latino female, ten White females, and four White males. In Class C, 37 students were enrolled: four freshmen, eight sophomores, thirteen juniors, and eleven seniors. The racial and gender make-up for Class C is as follows: one Black male, two Black females, one Indian American male, two Latino American males, three Latina American females, fourteen White females, and fourteen White males. Class Z includes four White students, two males and two females.

The data reflecting students' experiences in Classes A, B, and C are drawn from student course summaries and their personal reflections. Data from Class Z are drawn from student course summaries and my personal journal. The guidelines for the assigned personal reflections are as follows:

Each entry should be dated, 1-2 pages typed, 12 font, double spaced, using 1-inch margins. It should not be a summary of the readings or what happened in class, rather a personal reflection on your experience. What did it mean to you? Personal stories are encouraged.

The directions for the specific personal reflection included in this study are:

Describe three-five concepts discussed in class or found in the readings on Paulo Freire. How do these concepts relate to your life?

The directions for the student course summaries included in this study are:

Review the course packet and all assignments.

Write a 2-page paper, 12 font, double spaced, -1 inch margins including:

Your general feelings about the course,

Your favorite unit in the course,

Anything you would strongly recommend keeping in or dropping from in the course,

Anything else you think is important from your EPFE 201 experience.

Over 350 pages of student work were collected. All student data has been organized in binders, categorized, and color coded according to Class A, B, C or Z. Within each class, academic standing, gender, and ethnicity of students is tallied. Birth names have been removed from all student work, and the data is kept secure.

Data Collection: Formal Teaching Observation

In an attempt to strengthen the validity of my study and gain insight into how my implementation of Freire's ideas are perceived by other academics, I include data obtained from a formal teaching observation conducted during the same academic year as Class A, B, and C (2010-2011). The observation was conducted by the assistant department chair and another tenured professor of education from the same department. It took place approximately mid-semester in a typical EPFE 201: Education as an Agent for Change class in which 34 students were enrolled: two freshmen, six sophomores, nine juniors, fifteen seniors and two graduate students. The racial and gender make-up for the class was as follows: two Black females, three Black males, three Latina American females, one Asian American female, two Asian American males, twelve White females, and eleven White males.

The lesson I facilitated on the day I was observed was the team meeting on Paulo Freire (Appendix C). I was observed for approximately 45 minutes, and then left the room to provide an opportunity for the professors to have a private conversation with the students. That conversation lasted about 15 minutes. After returning, I thanked the professors for visiting and facilitated a ten-minute wrap up of the day's lesson on Freire. I use the data from the formal written evaluation, which was two single-spaced pages, to provide an additional perspective on my implementation of Freireian pedagogy.

Data Collection: Dialogue Partner

When I was discussing my dissertation proposal with colleagues, I expressed my desire to find another educator who embraced Freire's ideas to gain a different perspective of implementing Freire's ideas in a social justice classroom. My dialogue partner's name was mentioned four times by different professors. I had never met my dialogue partner before asking him to participate in my study. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of this portion of my dissertation is the professional relationship that resulted from my dialogue partner's willingness to share his experiences learning about and incorporating Freire's ideas in his philosophy and pedagogy. As mentioned in Chapter I, this study has marked the beginning of what I anticipate will be an ongoing professional collaboration between my dialogue partner and me, with a shared mission of carrying on Freire's legacy. My dialogue partner is an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, and I have given him the pseudonym Malcolm.

Data collected from Malcolm include a questionnaire (Appendix G), two formal interviews, two classroom observations, and over 30 hours of ongoing dialogue over a period of two years; the first year was the same academic year of Class A, B, and C (2010-2011). The observations I conducted of Malcolm took place in an upper-level undergraduate teacher education course. The students were all seniors, and all but two had completed their student teaching assignments. The class had 25 students; the majority of them were White females ranging in ages from 21 to 25. There was one Black female and four White males, all in their early 20s. I took field notes during the classroom observations, and wrote reflective entries in my journal after each class. The interviews were recorded and took place in Malcolm's office; each interview lasted approximately one hour and I asked Malcolm to expand on the questions presented in the questionnaire. The ongoing dialogue included hours of phone conversations, emails, texts, and in-person discussions. We co-presented Freire's ideas at a conference in Colorado in 2011, which provided additional opportunities for dialogue. Field notes and journal entries were taken to document the data gathered from my ongoing dialogue with Malcolm.

Data Analysis: Coding

For student personal reflections and course summaries, I coded data for the following Freireian ideas and theories presented in Chapter II: critical consciousness; rejecting neutrality; discrimination; love, hope, and humility; lived experiences; oppression; liberation; dehumanization; humanization; dialogue; banking education; problem-posing education; racism; sexism; and classism. In addition, I coded the reflections and summaries for student

resistance, mass media, humor, and popular culture. For the formal classroom observation, I coded teacher enthusiasm/passion, classroom environment, observed student responses to my implementation of Freire, and perceived strengths and weakness of my pedagogy.

When analyzing data collected from Malcolm, I coded data from the questionnaire, interviews, ongoing dialogue, and classroom observations with my dialogue partner, specifically coding Freireian ideas and theories I present in this study. In addition, I coded similarities and differences between our understanding and implementation of Freire's pedagogy in our higher education classrooms. I give all quoted participants and my dialogue partner pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. I try to stay gender and racially specific when assigning pseudonyms.

Data Interpretation: Emerging Themes

During the process of coding student reflections, the following themes emerged: understanding hegemony and oppression; addressing the denial of racism; rejecting banking and embracing problem-posing education; affirming dialogue as a fundamental educational tool; and embracing love, hope, and humility in education. The themes that emerged from the coding of student course summaries include student transformation; exposure to different opinions; a loving learning environment; care, love, and compassion in education; support for my passionate pedagogy; and appreciation from students. The student data coding process for resistance lead to two themes: topic resisters who are open to other aspects of my pedagogy and general resisters who reject my pedagogy. From the coding of data on my dialogue partner, the following themes emerged: the introduction to Freire's work, Freire's impact on

his pedagogy, the implementation of Freire's ideas, experiencing student resistance, and our pedagogical similarities and differences. Data relevant to the themes drawn are presented in Chapters IV and V. Consistent with autoethnographic research, analytical commentary is woven throughout the findings chapters. In Chapter VI, the final chapter, I provide further analysis of the data presented throughout the dissertation and reflect on Freire's ideas and theories.

CHAPTER IV

FREIRE IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE CLASSROOM: PERSONAL PRAXIS

“The progressive educator must always be moving out on his or her own, continually reinventing me and reinventing what it means to be democratic in his or her own specific cultural and historical context.” (Freire, 1997)

In this chapter, I present data that addresses my first three research questions: how have my experiences with Freireian pedagogy infused my educational practices as an instructor of higher education, how do my undergraduate college students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire’s concepts, and how can an analysis of student resistance to my implementation of Freire’s ideas and theories help me develop a more inclusive pedagogy? I chose to analyze two typical classes and one atypical class from an undergraduate course I teach called Education as an Agent for Change. All three classes were from the 2010-2011 academic year and followed a similar course outline (structure). I begin with a description of the course in this study to address my first research question and help frame the findings. Other relevant course materials, including the syllabus, can be found in the appendices. I then present data from student personal reflections and course summaries, as well as data pertaining to student resistance to my implementation of Freire’s pedagogy. Finally, I include findings from a formal teaching observation of me to gain insight into how other academics may perceive my implementation of Freire’s ideas and theories.

Education as an Agent for Change

Education as an Agent for Change is a general education course that meets an undergraduate interdisciplinary requirement for graduation. The course objectives include identifying complex problems facing education, describing one's values and their relationship to educational agencies, demonstrating communication skills used to affect change, and describing the potential role of the school as an agent for change. A complete list of the course objectives can be found in the syllabus in Appendix B. Over 20 sections are offered each semester, and the department supports creative pedagogy and grants significant academic freedom when meeting course objectives. In this section, I describe the pedagogical choices, including assignments and activities, specific to the semesters included in this study.

On the first day of classes, I arrived early, arranged the desks in rows of three, and turned them at a 45-degree angle so the students could see each other, as well as the front of the classroom. I left about eight feet between the two sides of desks so that I could move freely from the front to the back of the classroom. I intentionally made the rows of desks only three deep so I could literally walk right up to each student if I wanted to. I filled the white board with the usual important first-day information, including the class name, my name, and directions for the name tents and information cards that I had placed on all of the desks. I displayed my yellow, tattered copy of bell hooks's (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* upright and next to the less tattered, bright red, copy of Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Neatly arranged on the table were the Required Course Reading Packet, extra name tents and cards, a stack of syllabi, and the class lists. I then put in a "Molly Mix" of music and cranked

in up so that it could be heard down the hallway. When the students started filing in, 2Pac's "Smile" was thumping, and I was moving about the classroom to the rhythm:

There's gonna be some stuff you gonna see that's gonna make it hard to smile in the future.
But through whatever you see, through all the rain and the pain,
you gotta keep your sense of humor.
You gotta be able to smile through all this bullshit.
Remember that. (Scarface, 2Pac, Johnny, 1996, track 10)

I tried to welcome each student by looking them in the eyes and saying hello. I felt the music and the energy of new students pumping me up for the most important day of the semester: Day One.

I described what the class was all about, referring to the title: Education as an Agent for Change. I told the students we were going to talk about issues of injustice that they may have never talked about in a classroom setting. I told them I was going to rock their worlds, and that we were going to solve all of the world's problems in four months! I described my nontraditional educational philosophy, talked about social justice education, and explained the syllabus. On the second day of class, I had students pick a partner to interview and then introduce to the rest of the class. The first week of class was fundamental in setting the tone, and I taught it as though it was my last. I wanted to get students fired up to embrace education as an important tool when addressing injustices, to genuinely believe that we could make a difference if we work hard to understand each other's differences, and I wanted to convey to students that I loved teaching.

During the second week of the semester, I taught a unit called, "Creating a Loving Freireian Learning Environment." I started by presenting an argument that the morale in the

United States is low as a result of a post 9/11 fear-based society, an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, a judicial system that functions well for Whites and those with resources and poorly for non-Whites and those without resources, an unequal educational system, lack of access to quality healthcare for millions of Americans, and economic difficulties resulting from unemployment and underemployment. I posed the statement: “It’s time to reflect on the human race and ask ourselves....Where is the Love?”

I then played the music video “Where is the Love?” performed by the Black-Eyed Peas (2003). We broke into groups and dissected the lyrics. I asked students to share parts of the song that resonated with them. Students in each class indicated that they had heard the song many times, but never really listened to the message. The following stanza stood out to many students:

But if you only have love for your own race
Then you only leave space to discriminate
And to discriminate only generates hate
And when you hate then you are bound to get irate, yeah.
(Timberlake et al., 2003, track 13)

Students indicated that this stanza was powerful because it encourages the listener to love people from all races. When tackling issues of discrimination and hatred, embracing difference is a fundamental step toward understanding others.

Students from all three classes indicated that the following lines in the song pointed out that our focus on material gain has led to moving us in a direction away from our humanity:

Most of us only care about money makin’
Selfishness got us followin’ our wrong direction

And:

Yo' whatever happened to the values of humanity?
Whatever happened to the fairness and equality?
Instead of spreading love we're spreading animosity
Lack of understanding, leading lives away from unity

I used the final lines of the song to frame the ensuing dialogue about the role love plays in leading fulfilling and happy lives:

Now ask yourself
Where is the love?
(Timberlake et al., 2003, track 13).

This Black-Eyed Peas song sends a powerful message about the current state of the United States, and it reinforces hooks' (1994) call for a "revolution of values," which will be discussed later in this section.

I asked students to describe what love means to them. We talked about the role love plays in their lives. I facilitated a dialogue on how people learn how to love. I asked students if they thought teachers should love the content being taught. Finally, I asked them if they thought teachers should love their students. The last prompt elicited concern among students, but most seemed to ponder the thought once I clarified I was not talking about romantic love. I told students that I love teaching, I love my content, I love my students, and that my love of humanity motivates me to fight for social justice.

I then described Freireian ideas I believed help create a loving learning environment; including becoming a humanist; examining the student/teacher relationship; moving from banking to problem-posing education; facilitating authentic dialogue; respecting the knowledge of lived experiences; striving for oneness in difference; and embracing love, hope,

and humility. The following weeks included lessons on understanding the purposes of education and examining different educational philosophies.

During my lessons on the purpose of education, I played songs that past students had submitted and then asked students what they thought was the purpose of education for the person who submitted the song. For this academic year, I played 2Pac's *Pain* (1994). In this song, 2Pac raps about the struggles he faced as a Black man growing up in gang-infested neighborhoods, including engaging in illegal activity to survive. Here is an excerpt:

Maybe if they tried to understand me
 What should I do?
 I had to feed my fuckin' family
 What else could I do
 But be a thug

And:

Never been a stranger ta homicide
 My city's full of gang bangers and drive bys
 Why do we die at an early age?
 (Shakur, 1994, track 8).

Later in the song, 2Pac expresses the hopelessness and despair he experiences in his tough life:

Don't wanna die
 Tell me why
 Cause this stress is gettin' major
 A buck fist across my face with my razor
 What can I do but be a thug until I'm dead and gone?
 (Shakur, 1994, track 8).

2Pac ends the song reminding the listeners that even though his life is full of pain, he cannot see himself living any other life. Ironically, he was murdered two years later:

Until they kill me
 I'll be livin' this life
 I know you feel me
 There's so much pain

Ohhh...
 Tired of the Strain and the Pain
 (Shakur, 1994, track 8).

I stopped the song and asked students what they thought the purpose of education was for this particular student. “He wants to get out of the gang life,” “He’s tired of losing friends and loved ones to gang violence,” and “He wants a different life,” were all comments students made. Then I played the official music video of Dierks Bentley’s *Beautiful World* featuring Patty Griffin. The setting of the video is in a music studio where Bentley and Griffin are happily sitting on stools singing with joy. Here is an excerpt:

There's so much to live for and so much to love in this
 Beautiful world

And:

So I hate that I sometimes miss what's right in front of my eyes
 Cause I know at the end of my road I'll be wanting more time
 Just another sunset
 One more kiss from my baby, a smile from a friend, in this
 Beautiful world

Finally, Bentley and Griffen close the song singing passionately together:

It's a beautiful world
 Yeah, it's a beautiful world
 Say what you will but I still believe
 It's a beautiful world
 (Beavers, 2009, track 7)

I asked students what they thought the purpose of education was for this student. “She wants to make sure her life stays great,” and I say, “She wants to keep her cycle of good fortune going.” This lesson reinforced my argument that people have different purposes of education depending on their life experiences. I also emphasized that purposes are not necessarily right or wrong, or good or bad, just different.

I tried to help students understand that everyone’s views of the world are shaped by their lived experiences. The lesson on the purpose of education was designed to encourage compassion and understanding of others. I argued that if a person has had a happy and secure life, he or she is more likely to embrace conservative ideas and advocate for little change. If a person has had a life of pain and struggle, without security, he or she is more likely to embrace progressive ideas and advocate for big change. Again, not right or wrong, not good or bad, just different.

Next, I assigned readings from bell hooks (1994) and showed excerpts from a film interview featuring bell hooks called *Cultural Criticism and Transformation* (Jhally & Jhally, 1997). I specifically encouraged students to embrace hooks’s concept of engaged pedagogy, where students actively participate in the educational process rather than being passive consumers. I included a discussion on Thich Naht Hahn’s holistic teaching philosophy, which involves teaching to the whole student: their mind, their body, and their spirit, which hooks (1994) presents in *Teaching to Transgress*. I argued that most higher education classes focus solely on students’ minds, neglecting other important aspects of their humanness. I urged students to embrace Hahn’s call for teacher as healer and told personal stories of my role of teacher as healer, including how I handled teaching after our school shootings in 2008.

In hooks's chapter "Engaged Pedagogy," she discusses the impact that Paulo Freire had on her personally and professionally and elaborates on his concepts of banking education, problem-posing education, praxis, conscientization, dialogue, and teacher neutrality. We discussed hooks' ideas on Freire presented in this chapter. I also created a skit (see Appendix E) from hooks' chapter titled "Paulo Freire," which is a conversation hooks has with herself about Freire's ideas, and had students volunteer to participate in the skit.

In the chapter titled, "A Revolution of Values," hooks presents her readers with the concept of "White supremacist capitalist patriarchy," which she describes as a value structure of Whiteness, wealth, and maleness. I explained that the ensuing injustices of this value structure include racism, classism, and sexism. I facilitated a dialogue on hooks' argument that these forces are intertwined and discussing them separately oversimplifies the resulting injustices, rendering any solutions incomplete. I argued that the first step in addressing racism, classism, and sexism is developing an understanding that the overarching value system in the United States is based on Whiteness, maleness, and wealth, which shapes society, ultimately defining success. As a class, we discussed hooks' (1994) call for a revolution of values in the United States, and I argued that if we do not radically change our value structure, or traits that society defines as desirable and important, we will not be able to address the ensuing injustices. I spent a great deal of class time helping students clarify their own values, and included a values clarification assignment in the course requirements (see Appendix D).

The lessons on hooks' concept of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy served as the foundation to our discussions on discrimination. In order to help students critically analyze

the impact of discrimination, I created lessons designed to enlighten students on the detrimental effects discrimination can have on people. The lessons included facilitating class discussions, engaging in group work, and incorporating mass media. I asked students to look at the messages they receive from the media about what defines beauty and success. I showed covers of popular magazines, played excerpts from the Black Doll White Doll study that was recreated and aired on CNN's *Anderson 360* in 2010, and facilitated dialogue that included the following questions: How do societal messages valuing Whiteness impact non-Whites, especially children? How does hooks' value structure lead to discrimination? How might taking Martin Luther King's recommendation (as cited in hooks, 1994) to move from a "thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society" (p. 27) impact our level of happiness? Is it time to redefine the American dream? How and why?

I used hooks' chapter on Paulo Freire to transition to lessons on his ideas and theories. For the next few weeks, we explored Freire's ideas presented in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), including hegemony, oppression, liberation, humanism, dehumanization, dialogue, conscientization, discrimination, banking education, problem-posing education, narration sickness, praxis, respect for lived experiences, oneness in difference, cultural pluralism, love, hope, and humility. I showed an interview from PBS's *Bill Moyers Journal* on economic injustice in the United States featuring Michelle Alexander and Bryan Stevenson (Moyers, 2010), which provided rich dialogue about the relevance of Freire's ideas in North America.

I used humor to try and break down barriers when we discussed racism. I played the song “Everyone’s a Little Bit Racist” from the musical *Avenue Q* when discussing Freire’s argument that people need to stop denying they are racist. Here is an excerpt:

Everyone’s a little bit racist sometimes;
 Doesn’t mean we go around committing hate crimes.
 Look around and you will find;
 No one’s really color blind.
 Maybe it’s a fact we all should face;
 Everyone makes judgments based on race.
 If we all could just admit
 That we are racist a little bit,
 Even though we all know that it’s wrong,
 Maybe it would help us get along.
 (Lopez & Marx, 2003, track 5)

As a class, we analyzed the lyrics. This lesson provided opportunities for students to understand that everyone makes judgments based on race and, as Freire claimed, accepting that premise is fundamental when tackling issues of racism.

When discussing the concept of hegemony, I used humor to reinforce arguments I presented in class. I claimed that people in power often do not want the masses to learn how to think critically because it may threaten their position of power. I showed an excerpt from George Carlin’s HBO special called *Life is Worth Losing* (Urbisci & Carlin, 2005). Carlin talks about how our country has wealthy owners who influence policy for their own personal gain:

They spend billions of dollars every year lobbying, lobbying, to get what they want. Well, we know what they want. They want more for themselves and less for everybody else, but I’ll tell you what they don’t want. They don’t want a population of citizens capable of critical thinking. They don’t want well-informed, well-educated people capable of critical thinking. They’re not interested in that. That doesn’t help them. That’s against their interests.

That's right. They don't want people who are smart enough to sit around a kitchen table and think about how badly they're getting fucked by a system that threw them overboard 30 fucking years ago. They don't want that! (Urbisci & Carlin, 2005)

Carlin then argues that the "owners" intentionally deny citizens critical thinking skills in their attempts to enhance their own power and wealth:

You know what they want? They want obedient workers. Obedient workers, people who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork. And just dumb enough to passively accept all these increasingly shitty jobs with the lower pay, the longer hours, the reduced benefits, the end of overtime, and vanishing pension that disappears the minute you go to collect it, and now they're coming for your Social Security money. (Urbisci & Carlin, 2005)

This skit elicited laughter from students in all classes and led to a dialogue on why people in power may not want the populous to be critical thinkers. Furthermore, it is a sobering example of the selfish intentions of many currently in positions of power in the United States.

The final portion of the semester included a unit titled, "Using Mass Media and Popular Culture as an Agent for Change." Each semester, I pick a social justice issue that I believe students are uninformed or misinformed about, and I use mass media, popular culture, and Freireian pedagogy to implement the unit. For the semesters included in this study, I used the Iraq War as the social justice issue because I felt the war was the most misunderstood hegemonic bloodshed of our time.

Students participated in four team meetings (Appendix C) and applied the theories and philosophies discussed in class to search for remedies to our hot topics (praxis and problem-posing education). After each team meeting, the entire class discussed the group findings. The team meetings were designed to provide opportunities for students to be engaged in the learning process and voice their opinions on issues that are relevant to them. In addition,

discussions, group projects, and personal reflections were incorporated throughout the semester to help students make connections to content presented in class. I tried to maintain safe spaces for all students to participate.

Throughout the semester, I explained to students that I believe that most Americans have more in common with each other than they do with the small percentage of wealthy people who might look like them. I claimed that powerful forces are committed to pitting the masses against each other by manipulating their perceptions of race, ethnicity, and social and political beliefs. I argued that most people have moderate views on social and political issues even though the information presented in the media makes it appear as though we have stark contrasts.

I showed one of my favorite movie clips from the film *Bulworth* (Beatty, 1998), which is about a United States senator running for reelection in California. Senator Bulworth had given up on the political process, which he believed had been hijacked by special interest groups. In the scene *Obscenities*, he argued, “White people have more in common with colored people than they do with rich people.” My intent of showing this movie clip was to highlight the misconception that race unites us more than socioeconomic class, or that race is more important than our humanness. I tried to help students become critically conscious that powerful forces seek to divide the populous, rather than unite us. In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), Freire quotes a passage by Osmarino Amancio that so eloquently reinforces this divisive premise, which I presented to the classes:

In the beginning... we believed the story we were told by the mighty – that the Indians were our enemies. The Indians, on their side, manipulated by these same mighty ones, believed them as well – that we were the enemies. As time

went by, we discovered that our differences should never be the reason for our killing one another on behalf of the interests of the mighty. We discovered that we were all ‘Rain Forest People,’ and that we have always desired only one thing around which we could all unite: the rainforest. Today...we are a unity in our differences (p. 135).

I provided opportunities throughout the semester for students to engage in dialogue with each other to help them understand our similarities and differences in culture, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and political affiliation; as a humanist, I advocated acceptance of difference and otherness as integral in the quest for mutual humanization.

Student Responses to Freire’s Ideas and Theories

In an attempt to understand which Freireian ideas and theories resonated with my students, I assigned a personal reflection, which was included in the syllabus (Appendix B), with the following prompts: describe three to five Freireian concepts that resonate with you, and how do these concepts relate to your life? For this study, I coded over 100 pages of personal reflections and came up with the following themes: understanding hegemony and oppression; addressing the denial of racism; rejecting banking and embracing problem-posing education; dialogue as a fundamental educational tool; and embracing love, hope, and humility in education. Student responses that relate to each theme are presented in this section. Unless otherwise noted, students are all between the ages of 18 and 24. All quoted students have been given pseudonyms, which were chosen to represent gender and perceived race. For example, DeShawn and Demetrius are Black males, Julio and Jose are Latino American males, Shu-feng is a Taiwanese female, Amanda and Heather are White females, John and David are White males, Deja and Jazmine are Black females, Catalina and Alma are

Latina American females, Sahib is an Indian American male, and so on. For some of the themes, I had over 30 responses; in this chapter, I use several student comments per theme, but added Appendix F that includes additional student comments to help strengthen the validity of the study.

Understanding Hegemony and Oppression

Fundamental to understanding and implementing Freire's pedagogical ideas is accepting that hegemony and oppression exist in the United States. I introduced the concepts of hegemony and oppression early in the semester and tried to strengthen my argument with specific examples, such as disparities in wealth distribution as a result of loopholes in the tax codes (hegemony) and the inability of some groups of people to compete in our capitalistic system due to a lack of access to a quality education (oppression). I also encouraged students to tell their own stories of hegemony and oppression and looked for current examples in popular culture, which I wove into the class throughout the semester. Jose and Justin provided their own specific experiences of how hegemonic policies have negatively affected their lives:

Jose (B): I believe the greatest destruction of humanity is hegemony. When I used to live in Chicago in a poor neighborhood, I personally experienced the prejudice policies in our public services. The school that I attended was very crowded, and I didn't have the necessary resources to demonstrate my full potential. I don't remember having music, art, or computer classes.

Justin (A): Freire thinks that hegemonic practices have created oppressive situations worldwide. I couldn't agree more, that's one of the things I want to change. A personal example would be my home. We almost lost the house a couple years ago because my parents refinanced to help put my sisters through college (I'm paying my own way) and nearly had to cash in their retirement savings. When we refinanced the bank made them sign something that had in fine print that they had the right to change our interest rate whenever they wanted. Ridiculously, they did. If you've seen Michael

Moore's "Capitalism: A Love Story" then you know exactly what happened. The fat cats in the financial sector decided they wanted more money so they lobbied congress and Bush hard to get all the banking and housing regulations eliminated. It was raw, they did it purely for power and money with no care and want of us little people. Millions of Americans were not so lucky as my family and many are out on the street.

Jose's and Justin's stories transcended race, reinforcing my premise that although race is an important aspect of oppression and hegemony, one's socioeconomic status often supersedes race when it comes to access to services and power to impact policy.

Julio reinforced Freire's claim that many oppressors are unaware that hegemonic policies oppress others, which is a vital aspect of understanding why many oppressive policies continue to be implemented:

Julio (C): The purpose of hegemonic policies, according to Freire, is to maintain the position of power and wealth that the elite hold over marginalized people. The essence of hegemonic practices I believe is that they are so embedded into popular culture that they are rarely challenged by marginalized persons. Hegemonic policies are so much a part of the status quo that often the elites do not even consciously understand that they are implementing these practices.

Julio sheds light on two very important points. First, many oppressors are unaware they are oppressing. Second, many oppressed are unaware they are being oppressed. A critical understanding of both possibilities is fundamental when understanding hegemony and oppression. It relates directly to the importance of becoming critically aware that a problem exists. Awareness is often the first step when addressing inequality and injustice because if people are not aware a problem exists, they certainly will not take action to find remedies.

Although hegemonic policies can be intentional or unintentional, I urge students to examine the possibility of intentional oppression, or hegemony with a political objective. In Daniel's reflection, he tied oppression to education as a political act:

Daniel (A): A term that Freire talked about in great length was oppression. To me the definition is being held back, or prevented from doing something. This in my opinion is describing our modern day educational system. With the school boards eliminating certain programs, like music or art, it is hindering the youths of their creativity and imagination. It seems like our society is molding our children into robots that are easier to control. As Freire stated, it is a political move to educate the people of your country. He also stated that it is just as political to keep the people of your country uneducated.

While some students seemed reluctant to accept that policies are intentionally developed and implemented to hold groups of people back, Daniel clearly embraced the idea that our current educational system does just that. From my perspective, having a student truly understand this concept was refreshing. Josh expanded this idea, claiming the powerful intentionally hide hegemonic practices from the people:

Josh (A): When I look back on how much this power struggle affected my life it's mind blowing that I would allow it to happen. Then I realized that this is exactly how it happens. The powerful take away power from the lesser, not by obvious means. They are under the radar. They take their time and take all the power from under our noses.

Whenever a student writes "mind blowing," I feel I am reaching my objective of conscientization. Josh was astute in recognizing that intentional hegemony is often done over long periods of time. It seems much easier to recognize a major policy that has immediate impact on people. For example, the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 had an immediate impact on millions of families quickly after it was implemented. The war on drugs, on the other hand, began in the 1970s. In the decades that followed, harsher drug laws continued to be passed, such as mandatory minimum sentencing for crack cocaine, three strikes and you are out, longer sentences, zero tolerance, privatization of prisons, and many more policies that have devastated Black, brown and poor communities throughout the United States. Many of these

laws passed without people even realizing they existed. This is a classic example of the hegemony and oppression Josh was referring to. Michelle Alexander claims the war on drugs is a well-disguised plan of racialized control. As Josh indicated, the real objective was quite possibly “under the radar” and the policy makers were successful in taking “all the power away from under our noses.”

I can honestly say that I have never had a Black or Latino student deny that oppression exists in the United States. On the other hand, I have had several White students wholeheartedly embrace meritocracy. “Anyone can have the American dream. Just work hard enough,” and “Poor people are just lazy” are comments I have heard from students. As a teacher, I can say over and over again that oppression exists in our country, but I find that when other students tell personal stories of feeling oppressed, students who resisted the ideas at first are far more likely to understand them after hearing other students’ stories. I encourage students to tell their stories in class, as well as write about them in their reflections. DeShawn and Jazmine wrote the following:

DeShawn (A): I was born into a situation where I was oppressed from birth. I still face many struggles, which I didn’t understand until taking this course and learning about people like Paulo Freire and bell hooks. Through these wonderful leaders I was introduced to the world of critical thinking, no longer just taking in information in as it is. Now I try to look at it from all different angles. For the longest time I had low self-esteem about my education; I just didn’t feel that it was possible for someone of my skin color, it seemed that we had to work harder than most just to be average. But now I know that it was much deeper than I thought it was. A system was designed to keep us down, and by keeping us down, we became scared to read therefore we missed out on a lot of important information.

Jazmine (B): I can relate to this simply because of this world I am growing up in. A prime example is the fact that the Blacks make 65cents to the dollar of what Whites make. That there is definitely oppression! Another example is from the days following

slavery in which several ridiculous rules were made for the sole purpose of trying to prevent as many Blacks as possible from voting.

While Jazmine supported her argument with facts, DeShawn talked about the impact oppression has had on his self-esteem. Both perspectives are important, and students seem to respond well to numerical data. However, I find some students do not understand the profoundly negative impact of oppression on self-esteem and self-efficacy. The debilitating result is often hopelessness. Throughout the semester, I wove in the concept of addressing hopelessness as a fundamental starting point when addressing hegemony and oppression. Embracing hope is a theme that will be expanded on later in this chapter.

John articulated a realistic assessment of hegemonic policies in the United States, which have benefitted the wealthy at the expense of the workers:

John (B): I read the paragraph about hegemony and it seemed to make sense. Recently, I have read online accounts of Wall Street billionaires and also of big, greedy corporations. They talk about how corporations don't recognize their workers, but they also glorify their hierarchal positions. Then I often read about how people complain they aren't getting paid adequately for "what they contribute" at work. Most of these complaints can't be solved. Like the review said, the ones in power are accustomed to keeping things where they are at, but I also believe that a "critical consciousness" is necessary to overcome these problems. Workers feel threatened (losing their job, getting blackmailed), then they feel they have been oppressed and want to fight back. There seems to be very little hope and fighting fire with fire won't work because the oppressor has a bigger arsenal.

John was astute at recognizing a problem exists with the relationship between Wall Street (financial institutions and corporations) and Main Street (workers), and he supported critical consciousness in addressing the problem. However, I felt a sense of helplessness in his writing, which is not uncommon in student papers. I feel helpless sometimes too, and helplessness can lead to hopelessness. John's recognition of a lack of hope seems prevalent in

the United States today. Sometimes the problems seem too overwhelming to address. Brandon also sounded less hopeful that change can happen:

Brandon (A): The country is very hegemonic, even with a fancy new president and a House majority of “liberals.” Nepotism runs rampant in this country, people get rejected from Harvard in favor of legacies and families that donate obscene amounts of money to them. This occurs in every corner of our society, from schools to even the simplest laws. The rich have the means to keep themselves in power and they use it.

Brandon provided an excellent example of hegemony in the admission process at Harvard, and I certainly appreciate his frankness. He and John demonstrated critical awareness of hegemony and oppression in the United States. However, I worry that they think hegemony and oppression are forces that cannot be overcome, so they accept them. This is one reason I take my role of helping students find hope very seriously. It was refreshing to read Joe’s reflection, who, like Brandon and John, is a member of the dominant group of White males. Joe claimed that there will always be people who are marginalized. However, as a supervisor, he also expressed a strong desire to make conscious efforts to humanize all people.

Joe (A): The more I think about it, the more I feel power corrupts. There will never be a state of existence where no one is marginalized, but there can be existence of humanizing and just policies for those not in power. In the hierarchy of power, I have many times been in charge, and I hope I have not oppressed anyone. Unfortunately, someone needs to lead the masses, but the lower people on the chain need to know they are just as important as the person who is leading them.

I admire Joe’s desire to treat all people with respect, and I believe he is probably a great person to work for. I am concerned about his hierarchical attitude describing leaders and masses. I wonder what Freire would think of this entry. On the one hand, he seems to respect all people. On the other hand, he seems content with having people “lower on the chain.”

Joe's entry also makes me think about the role gender and Whiteness played in developing his perceptions of hegemony and oppression.

In my attempt to instill a sense of hope, I spent time talking about solutions to oppression, including Freire's idea of authentic liberation, which denies the effectiveness of the oppressor trying to liberate the oppressed. This concept is often difficult for students to comprehend. Heather clearly understood Freire's ideas on oppression and authentic liberation and described how she would address them in her own classroom:

Heather (B): Paulo's concepts are all a way to help people who have been oppressed. He believed in liberation. His personal beliefs were that only the oppressed can liberate themselves. After liberating themselves, they can then liberate the oppressor. This is something that relates to me because it's something I can teach others. By educating people who are being oppressed, you can give them the chance to do everything they ever wished they could do. This is something that can be applied to any school because regardless of the location I think there are always people who are being held back in some way.

As clearly demonstrated in the student reflections used in this study, many students gain an understanding of hegemony and oppression. However, I rarely have students articulate Freire's idea that in authentic liberation, the oppressed actually liberate the oppressors. In conversations I have had with other academics, some have expressed the belief that undergraduate students are incapable of understanding Freire's work, and that his ideas and theories should only be used in graduate classes. Heather's reflection reinforced my argument that undergraduate students are capable of grasping Freire's concepts, including his theory of authentic liberation.

It is not uncommon for me to say in class, “It is okay if you to get angry over the topics we discuss in class. Sometimes anger is the motivating emotion that leads us to take action.” Amanda indicated that thinking about oppression and hegemony made her angry:

Amanda (B): When I think about this concept, I get angry. Barely anyone in the lower class has a chance of breaking away from their class, and it doesn't matter how smart or talented they are. Then you have the people in the upper class who just keep making more and more money, there is no constant for them. Then we keep putting the upper class into government positions, so of course they are going to make policies that only protect or enhance their money or power, but they forget about the rest of the country!

I wrote “Right on!” on Amanda’s paper because this was an understanding of oppression and hegemony that I wanted, as well as an emotional response that often precedes action. I was tremendously pleased when I read Amanda’s reflection.

Addressing the Denial of Racism

Freire wrote extensively on the importance of all people, especially Whites, to stop denying racism exists. He believed that this denial is a major obstacle to addressing the issue of discrimination. David agreed with Freire’s premise that many people do not believe they are racist and provided an explanation of why racism still exists, as well as why we need to confront it:

David (A): A lot of people deny racism existing, but it is still very prevalent today. We have made some progress, but I honestly don't think we will ever overcome racism. African Americans and Hispanics are the ones who suffer most from it. First and foremost, we enslaved them. Second, two thirds of our prisons are filled with African Americans even though there are just as many white people engaging in the same crimes. Finally, White people were completely segregated from blacks and have always thought they were better. I guess the reason why I am writing about this is because of Freire talking about confronting it. I feel this is extremely important because if we deny racism exists, or don't confront what happened during times of slavery, we can never come together as a nation. We were all immigrants once and the

diversity is what makes our country so great. We need to confront the issue of racism and accept and embrace everyone for who they are.

I wholeheartedly support David's argument and have expressed similar points in class. His account of the historical formation of the United States, as well as his humanist perspective of valuing all people, resonates with my social justice mission. Unfortunately, racism does exist; Sarah admitted to denying racism publicly, yet accepting it privately by distinguishing between groups of Black people:

Sarah (B): Paulo says that many people do not regard themselves as racist, and this denial is a major obstacle in promoting change. I believe wholeheartedly that I am included in that group. I will deny I am a racist to just about everyone, but a few of my closest friends have heard what I have to say. I have always believed that there were two different types of Black people, those who work hard to get somewhere with their lives and don't complain and those who believe that they are just entitled to things because of what their ancestors had to go through. The attitude does not just apply to Blacks but to many people and is the reason, I believe, that racism continues to exist. I do wish that we could be one nation that does not regard skin color but instead embrace our differences. I don't believe that is possible though until we work through our own attitudes about others and ourselves.

Sarah's argument that there are different groups within the Black race can be applied to all races. While I appreciate her honesty, I am troubled by her specific reference to Black people. She did attempt to expand her claim to include other groups. However, my interpretation is that she is racist, and, unfortunately, I believe her attitudes about Blacks are not uncommon.

Melissa, on the other hand, admitted her own racist attitudes toward Mexicans:

Melissa (B): I really don't believe we will ever see peace in the world. I'd like to like the rest of the world, but I do not see it happening. I don't mind people coming to the United States to make a better life for themselves and their families, but there are some that I would like to see deported back to their country; because they do not respect my country or learn to speak our language when they should. I am talking about the Mexicans. I do not hate them as a whole, but the ones that I have been in contact with, I just wish they would really go home! I don't know if it is them

personally, or if it's just the fact that they are here taking our jobs...It strikes a chord with me, that is all, I don't hate them personally, I don't think.

Reading this reflection upset me. It was as though reality punched me in the stomach. I know people hold similar feelings about Mexicans, but seeing it written down in a college assignment reminds me of how much work our society has to do to truly have equality and justice for all.

James impressed me with his account of recognizing racism. Sometimes, Whites are unaware that racism is happening in front of their eyes. James indicated that he is aware and wrote about his own experiences as a White male who sees racism daily:

James (A): Freire speaks much on racism. I see racism on a daily basis. I am around and good friends with many African Americans and some are like brothers to me. But it amazes me how many people are truly racist. If I am with a group of White friends, I am looked at and treated completely differently than if I was with a group of White and Black kids. If I am at a restaurant or in public, with a group of my Black friends, we are looked down upon. It is very subtle, but I can still see it... Most White people won't take the time to get to know a Black person, because they are truly racist. Some Black friends that I have are the most loyal people I know. But most Whites won't see that because they won't deal with them or trust them. It is absolutely disgusting.

When people see racism and feel nothing, I get worried. The more people get "disgusted" with racism, the more likely efforts will be made to combat it. Unfortunately, racism is not always obvious. Courtney distinguished between overt racism and less obvious racism:

Courtney (A): Obvious racism, such as that displayed by the Ku Klux Klan, still exists today. This is such a sad reality in today's advanced society. I cannot (but have to) believe that people still can view other groups of people as less human, or less deserving than other groups of humans. Then to see the crimes groups like the KKK commit against these other groups of humans is truly sickening. Also disturbing, is far less obvious and less violent discrimination against groups of individuals. An example that comes to mind is the "DWB" tickets that are often distributed – these are tickets that are prompted mainly because the driver of the vehicle in question is Black or brown. Police will ticket these minority drivers more often and more unnecessarily than they will for White drivers! Ugh!

In every class, I discussed DWB, or Driving While Black or Brown. I asked students if their perception of law enforcement was positive or negative. We discussed how people interact with police officers and why some might run from them or be disrespectful. I attempted to help students understand that as a result of negative experiences, such as police harassment, brutality, arrests, searches and seizures, drug raids in their communities, and mass incarceration, segments of society do not believe that law enforcement is there to serve and protect them. I asked students to share experiences of being pulled over by the police. When discussing DWB in all three classes included in this study, no students denied it existed. For some, it may have been the first time they thought deeply about how White privilege impacts one's driving experiences.

In order to expand the discussion on race, I made sure to explain that racism is not something that Whites do unto Blacks, rather a multidimensional form of discrimination based on perceived race that can be directed at any group, as well as within groups. Amanda wrote about creating critical consciousness about her experiences with racism as a White female:

Amanda (B): Another thing that Paulo says is that we need to stop denying racism exists. We can't fix a problem that most people don't even know is a problem, but there are many problems that stem from racism. Sometimes I feel that people think that White people are the only racist ones, but that's not true. I am White and have felt discriminated against all too often. So we all need to step back and see the truth.

Amanda's story supported my argument that Whites experience racism too, which is a fundamental aspect of breaking down barriers and addressing discrimination. If White students feel that they are being blamed for racism, especially if they do not feel racist,

classroom dialogue on remedies to racism will not work. Educators need to create a climate of inclusion, which is not easy because class dynamics and demographics change.

As a future educator, Emily urged people to stop denying racism by becoming critically conscious of the issue, and pondered how she might address the topic of racism in her own classroom:

Emily (B): It is true that as a society, we have progressed in the right direction, but we are still so far from ending discrimination. Racism can be seen every day, whether obvious or subtle. As a society, we must stop denying that racism is a problem... To me, this is like any problem; the first step is admitting that we have a problem. We cannot fully address and resolve the issue if denial of the issues exists. As a future special educator, I am not sure how I could address this in my classroom. I think it would depend greatly on the age and functioning of the students. I would like to create a safe classroom with room for all to participate, like Freire suggests. Only in this environment will I be able to facilitate dialogue about discrimination, racism, or any other issue that may arise.

In addition to advocating acceptance that racism is a problem, Emily displayed humility and critical thinking skills, which are both fundamental when teaching for social change. She admitted she did not have all of the answers and that the age and demographics of the class would impact her pedagogical choices. Consistent with what we had been talking about throughout the semester, Emily emphasized the importance of creating a learning environment where students feel comfortable discussing issues of discrimination.

Rejecting Banking, Embracing Problem-Posing Education

In the student reflections used in this study, almost all students wrote about the ineffectiveness of banking education and embraced problem-posing education. Additional student responses to this theme can be found in Appendix F. In this section, I present some of

the students' arguments against banking education. Julio linked banking education to oppression, and John connected banking education to hegemonic textbooks based on lies that are designed to instill a sense of patriotism and obedience:

Julio (C): Through using the banking concept of education, teaching has the effect of keeping oppressed people in their subordinated positions by not allowing them to view the world in any manner other than that which has been set out by the elites, who most often are those responsible for disseminating the accepted version of history. Using Paulo Freire's problem-posing pedagogical methods, however, can have a profound effect on how students view the world. This method can challenge students to think critically about the world around them, and in turn motivate them to act to change it.

John (A): Banking in history (memorization of dates and names) is a huge problem in high school history classes. Students learn to recite names and dates without critical thought or analysis of the issues that drove those people to do what they did and the context of what made that date important or what led to something happening when it did. Often times banking is used in conjunction with (and I'm not going to pull any punches here) what borders historical revisionism. In Texas, the state that largely sets textbook curriculums, the history curriculum is written with an agenda in mind – inspiring patriotism, obedience to the status quo, and what often amount to outright lies regarding the founding of our republic. This is then used to justify the values pushed by the ruling class.

Chris, Michael, and Alma wrote general criticisms of banking and support for problem-posing education:

Chris (A): No student likes to have useless, monotone, information thrown at them every day that they will only use once in their lifetime. With problem-posing, once a student gets informed of something, they stay informed. This leads the students to be willing and active participants in the world and trying to fix some of the problems that are going on.

Michael (A): One last point that I really liked is his concept of “problem-posing education.” To me, this style of teaching is the absolute best way to teach and to learn. I know I've said it before, but I really do believe that the best things we learn in life are not found in the pages of a textbook but in the social interactions we make with people each and every day. Communication is such a vital part of everyone's lives and the traditional “banking” style of education limits the development of that crucial life skill.

Alma (C): I believe that someone is smart when they know how to argue a point effectively and is driven by their views. Someone who just memorizes facts for the test is just good at memorizing. It is sad to realize that most teachers prefer to teach that way, but in the end did they really do their job?

Alma claimed that teachers prefer using banking education. However, I argue that teachers often teach how they were taught. Some might not even know they are banking or that there are other ways to teach. Other teachers believe that students have nothing to offer because they do not possess knowledge about the subject. Ethan articulated a strong distaste for banking education, as well as the teachers who practice it:

Ethan (C): Unfortunately, many teachers use what was even out of date 50 years ago when Paulo Freire was writing his books. Many teachers use banking education, which is where the teachers use the student as a storage bin for information that they bestow upon the students. In this system it is very likely that a teacher will suffer from narration sickness and this is something I cannot stand in the classes I take, teachers will drone on and on about nothing. It's insulting. Teachers in the system of learning usually feel superior to their students and feel that they are doing the students a great service by graciously giving them their time and sharing some of their knowledge with them.

I have yet to find a student who enjoys being talked to as though they do not possess any knowledge. As Ethan wrote, "It's insulting." Yet, it continues day after day in classrooms across the country.

Aside from Stephan (Z), who was a student resister included in this study, all students indicated that they prefer to be engaged in the learning process and do not enjoy when teachers lecture at them with little to no concern about including their voices. This one-way transfer of information found in banking education ignores the potentiality of students contributing to the learning process. Demetrius, Deja and Katie supported problem-posing education and argued that learning should be multidirectional:

Demetrius (A): One of Paulo's concepts is that teachers and students should engage with each other, rather than a one-way transfer of knowledge. I agree with this concept 100%... memorizing the work is not the way I learn. I learn by doing things to get muscle memory not by reading a book over and over again. That to me is a waste of time. It is one of the big reasons people do not go after higher education because they do not want to have to pay someone all this money for them to tell us to read this and memorize this. It is boring and a waste of time.

Deja (C): When reading about his concepts, I really drew myself to problem-posing education. I can relate and understand it. Problem-posing education means the teacher is not only being the one who teaches but the one who learns as well. This concept resonated with me because it's impossible (difficult) to be in a classroom when only the professor or teacher is always right and they are the only one to talk.

Katie (C): I believe that teachers and students should both learn from each other and not just the teacher teaching to the students. I can apply this to my life because I have had professors that just force so much information onto the students that we have to memorize and not actually put it into our memory. Dialogue involves working together, not just one person transferring knowledge. Teachers and students can learn from each other and engage into conversations about what they are learning in order to learn better.

Demetrius, Deja, and Katie indicated that learning collaboratively and being able to contribute to the process results in a much more gratifying experience. All three comments supported the notion that teachers should be open to learning from their students. This only works when teachers remain humble. For Freire, teacher humility is essential when educating for liberation.

Banking education is entrenched in our educational system. Megan, Lauren, and Amanda claimed that most of their classes were taught using banking education. However, Megan and Lauren argued against banking, while Amanda indicated that she has mastered the system, which made her feel intelligent, even though she questioned the effectiveness of the teaching method:

Megan (A): This relates to my life because although some teachers use dialogue when teaching, most use narration sickness. They do what's easiest for them and what works for them. They just stand in front of the room or on a stage and talk at the students instead of with the students. They just teach right from the book and have no opinion of their own of what they are teaching about. In a lot of my classes, especially being a business student, this is how my teachers "teach" their students. I really wish teachers and professors would stay away from this since, in my opinion, it really doesn't help the students learn the material....It really does make a big difference when I leave a classroom with a professor who encourages problem-posing education and when I leave a classroom where the teacher does not encourage this. It is so much more encouraging and creates such a better atmosphere when teachers and students are able to all learn from each other.

Lauren (A): The banking system does not require or teach critical thinking. When I was first introduced to this concept during this class, I realized that this had been just about my entire educational career until college years. The educational system needs to be reconstructed....I feel this is not done because there is fear that lies within our system that people will question and oppose concepts. At an early age they just want you to accept things without question. As I look back on my early education, I realize that there was not much engagement at all. Why is that? What is it that they are trying to hold children back from? The earlier we learn to critically think, the earlier we learn to function and cope within the world.

Amanda (B): [Referring to banking] This applies to my life because it has been going on in my life for my whole school career. Last semester was probably the easiest semester of my life because all I would have to do is fill out the study guide and memorize it about two hours before the test. I actually felt smart, because I put in so little effort but still got all A's. But looking back, I'm not sure if it is because I was smart, I think I just finally realized how college works. I am not sure what would happen if I went back and tried to take those tests again!

Megan, Lauren, and Amanda confirmed the dominance of banking education in the United States, and clearly questioned its effectiveness. However, the exclusion of students from the learning process can be found throughout the world. Shu-feng described her personal story of banking education in Taiwan:

Shu-feng (A): When I was a student in Taiwan, in my generation, our learning was just exactly like "narration sickness." Our studies were based on memorization and we rarely applied them to real life. All the memorization became short term memory and we forgot what we had studied after a while. So our learning mostly was for the

purpose of getting high scores from exams rather than coming from our motivation based on what we liked or what we are interested in.

As Shu-feng indicated, when students are treated as empty vessels to be filled with content that requires rote memorization, the information is often forgotten shortly after taking the exam. She claimed that part of the reason she would forget is that the information did not relate to real life. Irrelevance of material is a fundamental flaw of banking education. Jazmine argued that problem-posing education helped her make content relevant:

Jazmine (B): I have come across teachers who, in a sense, followed Paulo Freire's concept on having a proactive sense of teaching. Those teachers took charge of the classroom, in a positive way, and changed it for the better. Those teachers acted as facilitators and made our class feel like it was a cultural circle. Those teachers took it from just boring lecture to actual problem solving strategies. In return, the material that once seemed irrelevant to the class suddenly seemed to have a purpose.

Jazmine's reflection was profound and powerful. The idea that problem-posing education can transform learning from a meaningless experience to a meaningful experience should be read by all current and future teachers. Fortunately, during the coding and theming process, I noticed that some students in teacher education linked Freire's ideas on banking and problem-posing education to how they wanted to run their own classrooms. Emily compared her general classes to her education classes. Jose, Catalina, and Kayla discussed their desire to incorporate problem-posing education into their pedagogy. Alyssa indicated that she was excited to learn from her students:

Emily (B): "Banking" education is not exciting, and is not effective. A student will learn much more willingly and actively if the teacher acts as a facilitator, while the student actively participates in the classroom. When I began college, I was taking many general classes that did not interest me, and the professors that I had did not seem to mind that I was disinterested. Once I began my education courses, I was much more active in the classroom, and I have been much more successful as a student! Not

only have I achieved high grades, but I really feel like an active learner, and that the information I am gaining will stick with me.

Jose (B): I believe this [problem-posing] is the most important concept to incorporate in the classroom in any grade level. I will strive to apply this essential concept into my instruction when I become a teacher. Students become more comfortable to demonstrate their full potential when teachers initiate and maintain a dialogue of liberatory education. I believe both the student and the teacher must engage in dialogue, rather than just the teacher lecturing to the students.

Catalina (B): Freire opposed the banking education system. This concept relates to my life because when I become a teacher I want to involve my students in the learning, not just talk for hours throughout the day and hand out tests. Learning is not fun that way. Students need to be interested in what is being taught. Most students are not auditory learners and cannot comprehend straight lectures. I am not an auditory learner, and if all my teachers used the problem-posing education system, I could only imagine how well I could have done throughout school.

Kayla (A): I, like many other students, have mastered the ability to deposit facts into my brain, withdraw them, and forget about them just as quickly. This method does not teach students for life and it does not contribute to overall growth of individuals. I think that education is, in some part, the memorization of facts. However, it is much more effective to learn the information and not just memorize...I believe that [problem-posing] is much more effective and liberating than the banking method. A classroom should be a free space where students are allowed to express their own opinions and question the material. This method inspires critical thinking as well as personal growth and is more conducive to learning rather than memorizing. In order to teach and benefit my students, I will encourage dialogues and critical thinking.

Alyssa (C): I am the kind of student who works best in a student-centered environment, where the main focus is on how the individual student learns. I love the fact that since I am going to be a teacher, I will be learning and teaching at the same time. It makes learning fun when I think about all the things I did not know and might be taught, whether by students, family, friends, teacher, etc.

Inspiring future teachers to move our educational system from banking to problem-posing education is a major professional objective of mine. Emily, Jose, Catalina, Kayla, and Alyssa embraced engaged learning, dialogue, critical thinking, multidirectional learning, and open

learning environments. Their reflections give me hope that my efforts are impacting future teachers and may contribute to the future of education in North America.

Affirming Dialogue as a Fundamental Educational Tool

Dialogue is an integral element in problem-posing education. Some students specifically addressed the concept of dialogue in education in their reflections. John, Megan, Heather, and Ebony argued that dialogue is essential to the learning process:

John (A): The most important thing I think that is brought up is the concept of dialogue, where a student and teacher engage in a conversation and exchange ideas rather than a one way transfer of knowledge. This is something that the better professors in a given department can be seen doing – a student will pitch an idea or ask a question from a certain angle that the professor had not considered before, and the rest of the class will begin to offer input. This leads to some really interesting and unusual ideas being thought through and very different perspectives to be considered. This fosters a very active and healthy learning environment, and increase student participation not only because the professor isn't talking over his students, but it allows for other students to actively help their peers think through their ideas. Dialogue is as far as I'm concerned an essential part of any productive learning environment.

Megan (A): Dialogue is a term that Paulo Freire uses to describe teachers and students engaging with each other rather than having a one-way transfer of knowledge....I believe that students learn much better this way. With my experience, this term relates to my life because anytime a teacher uses this to teach instead of just throwing a bunch of information at me, I tend to really understand the material and actually learn it, instead of trying to memorize it. Also, it gives the students a chance to voice their opinions and sometimes it helps to hear another point of view, or hear a student's thoughts on whatever subject we're talking about because sometimes it helps me understand the topic better. It also helps to hear personal examples that people share with the class.

Heather (B): This idea [dialogue] is something that I think is very important for any teacher to do. By having a conversation with someone you are letting them know that their thoughts are important and that you see them as a person. Dialogue has been something that I didn't really get from many teachers....In order for someone to become a better teacher and a better person they must learn how to interact with

different types of people. By interacting with all students this also helps the students to feel a sense of purpose. When a person feels important I feel like they participate more and are much more open to expressing their opinions.

Ebony (A): Dialogue is another concept that is presented in this essay. It is essential in education...When not given the opportunity to express thoughts or feelings, one feels silenced and not valuable. In the classroom it is up to the teacher to be the facilitator in the dialogue. This relates to my life because it will be my responsibility as a teacher to help incorporate my students into the dialogue and make sure it is fair on all sides.

While John and Megan indicated dialogue helped enhance their learning experiences and were characteristics of effective pedagogy, Heather and Ebony linked dialogue in education to helping them feel that they have a voice and are important in the learning process. Facilitating dialogue in the classroom has the potential to empower students by enabling them to express how the content relates their lives and others, which may result in a richer understanding of the material.

Freire argued that authentic dialogue must be motivated by love. James and Jessica connected dialogue and love for the world and others:

James (A): I really like Freire's ideas on dialogue. Dialogue is so necessary to make positive changes in the world. One must be able to communicate with others. If you can't speak with someone, how can you work with people to better the world. "If I do not love the world- if I do not love life- if I do not love people - I cannot enter into dialogue" (Freire). This is absolutely true. One must have a love for themselves, other people, the world, and life in general, in order to have perspective on issues... Engaging in communication is one way to better the world. It allows us to understand people and where their opinion is coming from.

Jessica (B): Dialogue between people is strangely difficult...When we love one another, and we love ourselves, we can enter into an understanding. It makes dialogue more productive, but often still very hard, even painful. This could be another reason why individuals avoid dialogue. Maybe people just want to be right in their own eyes, or they don't want to go through the pain of learning about someone else's suffering, or the pain of retelling their own suffering.

Although fundamental to liberatory pedagogy, facilitating authentic dialogue can be challenging. Jessica pointed out that many avoid dialogue because of the possibility of experiencing pain or causing pain in others, which helps explain why dialogue must be driven by love of humanity and a genuine desire for a better world.

Embracing Love, Hope and Humility in Education

Freire believed that love, hope, and humility are the driving forces in education for liberation, and this concept resonated with many students. Ebony discussed “sincere love,” remaining humble and having hope:

Ebony (A): Freire explains the important of “sincere love” (73). Teachers and people in general must learn how to be sincere and passionate about what they do. Humility is also important. One must remain humble and “open-minded, and to realize that learning is a never ending process” (74). I really love this quote. We never stop learning. When people think they know everything, then they shut out the opportunity to expand on that knowledge. This idea is so important. Above all, we must constantly remain hopeful and know that things can and will get better. This concept relates to my life as a whole. I have to continue to be humble, remain hopeful, and be sincere in my love.

I found Ebony’s reflection very insightful, as she connected love, hope, and humility to learning and life. I spoke often in class about how these emotions are not isolated, but interrelated. The more we understand the motivating (or debilitating) role they play in our everyday lives, the deeper we understand our humanness.

When I introduced the idea that love plays an important role in the learning process, some students indicated they had not thought about the role of love in education before our class. For example, Emily wrote:

Emily (B): Talking about the importance of love, love in education, and creating a loving learning environment was so captivating. I loved learning about Paulo Freire's philosophy, and I am interested in reading more about him after this class is over. I had not been introduced to the idea of talking about love and education together before this class. I have always had a passion for teaching, and I love what I'm going into, but I had not thought deeply about how to create a loving learning environment like Freire believed in.

In this study, one of my objectives is to help future teachers develop a language for their classroom pedagogy. Creating a loving learning environment, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is an example of the language I hope new teachers will use.

Darnell claimed Freire's ideas gave him hope that his struggles with past educational experiences may not be his fault, rather the pedagogy he has been exposed to:

Darnell (A): I'm not a big fan of school and find it troublesome on many occasions when I am in a classroom trying to pay attention. After reading Paulo Freire's ideological views on education and hope, I have a new profound take on education. I used to believe the problem was from me, and education was not my forte. However, after educating myself about these educational problems, I keep that in the back of my mind when I find myself struggling in class. Rather than having a pessimistic point of view on education, I try to keep hope alive and view education from an open mind.

By the time students get to the higher-education classroom, they have experienced over 12 years of schooling. The range of experiences varies greatly. For Darnell, his experiences resulted in him not thinking he was very good at school. I was pleased that he wrote that learning about Freire's ideas gave him hope, opening himself up to the possibilities of future educational endeavors.

Freire urged educators and students to remain humble. Ashley specifically addressed embracing humility in her own classroom, and Jacob talked about the importance of humility when facilitating dialogue; Jacob also linked humility to his own life:

Ashley (A): The next concept that I can relate to is to urge students and teachers to remain humble. This is important to me because for myself becoming a teacher, I never want to appear to be anything other than humble. I do not believe any individual is better than anyone else, and I would like to pass that belief on to my students too. I want them to always feel like they can approach me and that I will be there to listen without judgment and not act like I am superior to them. If everyone is humble it just creates a happier, open classroom.

Jacob (A): The first concept Freire presented that I have chosen to write about is the idea that teachers and students should remain humble. This comes about because he believed that teachers who aren't humble put restraint on the learning process. This happens when teachers feel that they are always right and shut down student ideas, even when they may have a very valid or interesting point. The whole point of humility is to help facilitate dialogue in the classroom. This dialogue can be snuffed by a conceited or egotistical teacher. In my life, humility is a huge part of my personality. I have achieved many great things already in my career as a student, but I've never really been one to brag or bring out my achievements in conversation just for the sake of being arrogant. This humility also carries over in the classroom. I have never once discredited what someone has said just because I felt I knew more than them. I have the idea that the more open you are to other's ideas, the more you will learn, and the better off you will be in life. I have also seen teachers who completely shut down or ignore students who make a point that they don't understand or don't agree with. I have seen firsthand how this close-minded arrogance can put a damper on the classroom dialogue.

Egotism and arrogance are major barriers to learning. When I discussed these characteristics in class, I asked the students, "If you think you know everything, are you going to be open to learning from others?" The obvious answer is "No." For this reason, humility is essential in problem posing education, and both Ashley and Jacob supported Freire's call to remain humble.

On the first day of class, I told the students that I did not know everything about the world, and that they might hear me say, "I don't know." I also said that I would ask them if they knew, and if not, we would research it together and try and find out. Michael wrote that he appreciated my humility in the classroom:

Michael (A): I think you are the first teacher I've had to have ever admitted he or she doesn't know everything and I really respect that. One of the biggest fears going into education was always that I wouldn't be able to fire off answers the way a lot of my teachers in my past have been able to. You've showed me that being a teacher is much more than teaching students, but the students and teacher learning from each other. I think in doing this, it made the class feel much more relaxed and allowed for a lot more discussion.

Michael confirmed that when a teacher remains humble, the classroom environment is more conducive to dialogue. When educators and students are driven by love, hope and humility, implementing problem posing education has the best chance of being effective in addressing social injustices.

Student Responses from Course Summaries

To further address how my students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire's concepts, I assigned a final paper titled "Summary of your Course Experience" with the following guidelines: review course packet and all assignments. Write a two-page paper including your general feelings about the course, your favorite unit in the course, anything you would strongly recommend keeping in or dropping from the course, and anything else you think is important from your EPFE 201 experience. I coded over 200 pages of student course summaries and the following themes emerged: student transformation; exposure to different opinions; embracing a loving learning environment; care, love, and compassion in education; support for passionate pedagogy; appreciation from students; and student resistance. Students responses related to the themes are presented in this section.

Student Transformation

On the first day of classes I said, “I want you to transform as a result of your experiences in this class. My hope is that you will become critically aware of the many problems our society faces and become motivated to find remedies and take action. I also hope that you will become more loving, compassionate, and accepting of others, especially for those who are traditionally marginalized.” I emphasized that I wanted them to leave the class with more questions about the world than they had when they came in. This section includes student comments that indicated transformation. Additional student comments on transformation are included in Appendix F.

Future teachers Michael, Ebony, Ashley, Amanda, and Catalina indicated that their course experiences in EPFE 201 were transformational and encouraged them to incorporate critical thinking and passion into their own pedagogy:

Michael (A): When I enrolled in EPFE 201 I can't say my expectations were very high. I mean the class looked interesting, but I never thought it would be my favorite class that I have taken at NIU to date. The material taught and the way you taught it gave me valuable bits of information that I will not only take with me into my career, but into my life. After recently switching to Special Education as my major, this was the first education class of any sorts that I have taken and I have learned a lot from the big picture in how you showed us all to critically think about everything, all the way to how you let those who learn in different ways, learn the way they do best, I have to say that you are one of, if not the most influential professors I have had at NIU in just over two years.

Ebony (A): I will definitely take away a lot from this class that I will not just use for my teaching career but in life. I have learned how to express my opinions clearer through my writing and how to work better in groups. The different educational philosophies of bell hooks and Paulo Freire have impacted me. They describe the type of educator I want to strive to become. Everything I learned will definitely be applied. I really have grown to appreciate education more from taking this course. Molly, your passion for teaching continues to be an inspiration. Your drive to get people thinking

outside the box, to get people out of their comfort zone is an inspiration. You are truly a blessing. Forward motion and constantly expanding your knowledge is essential. I have really enjoyed my time in this class. I wish you nothing but success with your future endeavors.

Ashley (A): I liked seeing how passionate you were about these individuals also. It was kind of refreshing. Usually you do not see teachers that get excited about their subject matter. When I become a teacher I will make sure I keep these individual concepts in mind and make sure I have engaged pedagogy. Always keep a positive attitude because that is what I believe many teachers are lacking now a days. Being a teacher does not mean you cannot be open with your students about your beliefs, especially in college. Finally, I would just like to say thanks to this class- I have become a critical thinker for life!

Amanda (B): Coming into this class I wasn't sure what to expect, but I am leaving this class enlightened. I am so happy that this is one of the required classes for the early childhood program, because if it wasn't I would have probably never taken it. I think you are such a great teacher and you made me so excited to come to class, and I was really bummed out when I had to miss. The way you teach is just so honest and your material is relevant. EPFE 201 only confirmed to me why I want to become a teacher. I truly do believe I could use education as an agent for change. This class has taught me to be a better teacher and human being. I'm sure it has also left others more open-minded than when they came in, and I appreciate that more than anything. I loved the open discussions and how you allowed everyone to participate in class. We got to hear others opinions that come from different walks of life, and it's very important to always remember that your own view is not necessarily the "right" view or the only view.

Catalina (B): I think that EPFE 201 experience will help me become a better teacher. I learned that a classroom should be fun and exciting that way students can stay interested. Learning about bell hooks and Paulo Freire's concept opened my eyes to how a classroom can be better for the students. I learned that education is the practice of freedom, which I repeat constantly in my head.

Other students referenced transforming into critical thinkers in their course summaries.

Lauren, Darnell, Shu-feng, Justin, and Stephanie wrote about how the course opened their minds and helped them think differently about the world:

Lauren (A): I never really thought about what Education as an Agent for Social Change meant. I knew the design of this course would be different but I didn't know it would cause me to think as much as it did. I had never really put as much thought

into my system of education or any of the concepts that were introduced. Taking this course opened up my mind and caused me to think more about my life and its past, present, and future. I started thinking about what I have been and where I was trying to go. The things I question I never really gave much thought to yet they are very important aspects of my life. I feel that without taking this course I would not be analyzing the things I have just simply accepted until this point. I think that people are often afraid to critically think. They are sometimes afraid that they will never find the answers within themselves or others. I can definitely say that the major thing I have taken from this course is to not be afraid of not knowing something or afraid to actually question anything.

Darnell (A): I felt that the course opened my eyes up from the power points to the class discussions, and the documentaries we watched. It gave me a new perspective about the life I live in. I've gained deep insight on certain issues and really realized the powerful meaning behind music. You taught that music can be that moving and how it can influence people.

Shu-feng (A): EPFE 201 has led me in a new direction and a new way of thinking for my future study. I have grown in my personal perspectives as a result of exploring the topics and themes presented in this course. Through "Introduction to Paulo Freire" and "Introduction to bell hooks" I have initiated having a sense of critical thinking. The interview of bell hooks in the film which we watched in class, reading the assignment, the professor's teaching, and the interaction and discussion between teacher and students in the classroom have all helped me become more aware of critical thinking in my life. I use to think that one problem can only have one solution and I finally have learned that one problem can sometimes have so many solutions. I have grown more than what I thought in this class, not only academically but also in my way of thinking. I am exploring things I never experiences before in my life and this class helped me realize that to be a student, that learning is not exclusively studying the text book.

Justin (B): The discussions in class were extremely eye opening. If someone did not know exactly what critically thinking is before this class, they most definitely know what it is after. I loved that everything was checked at the door as well. Everyone could just speak freely about mostly anything.

Stephanie (A): I have enjoyed having you as my Professor for EPFE 201! I feel like I have gotten to know you and feel comfortable around you. I really like your teaching style and how there is open dialogue among the students and you in the classroom. I have been very close-minded in the past about a lot of things. I have been focusing mainly on my studies and my direct life issues. EPFE 201 made me look outside of myself and take a look at other perspectives other than my own.

In the introduction to this study, I argued that the current educational system in the United States does not encourage critical thinking. Since the passing of NCLB in 2002, students have been conditioned to believe there is one right answer to a problem. Being open to multiple perspectives and possibilities is not encouraged in our current educational system. The transformation of students into critical thinkers is a primary objective in my pedagogy, and Lauren, Darnell, Shu-feng, Justin, and Stephanie indicated in their reflections that this goal was met. Conner took my objective to another level, and referred to our class as “a revolutionary process,” linking it to critical awareness:

Conner (C): Paulo Freire, a well-known educational philosopher, once said, “It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation.” The revolutionary process we went through in EPFE 201 has made me more critically aware of my surroundings and to always question material present to me in my educational career. EPFE 201 has greatly impacted my outlook on the educational system by giving me the information necessary to analyze different teaching styles my teachers have and be able to criticize or praise the way a specific class is taught.

Exposure to Different Opinions

Many students indicated in course summaries that they learned from the different viewpoints expressed in class and claimed that they enjoyed being a part of a diverse learning community. Marquis, Nicole, John, and Sahib wrote:

Marquis (B): This course has introduced me to multiple political educators such as Paulo Freire. The course has also given a great experience with people from different cultures, different backgrounds, and different political views. The course was completely stress free and was more relaxing than ever.

Nicole (B): I also was exposed to so many different viewpoints, which I believe is important to be exposed to. I also appreciated the emphasis on critical thinking and

critical awareness as that is an imperative part of being a contributing member of society. Your enthusiasm for this course was inspiring since the first class.

John (B): Molly was a great teacher in that she brought out everyone's opinion. I think a free-thinking, open class has brought us all together, even if our experiences weren't the same or even close to being similar. It's tough to say that the most fun things in life come by too quick and this semester was all I intended it to be.

Sahib (C): The individuals in the classroom all came from different backgrounds, which was excellent for class discussions. It is always enjoyable to hear different perspectives about current issues and really aides in the learning experience.

Scott, Colin, Eric, and Kathryn were all what I perceived as politically and socially conservative White students who supported my pedagogy because it enabled them to voice their opinions and exposed them to different ways of thinking:

Scott (C): I knew going into EPFE that I was in for a roller coaster. I knew where Molly's political views were and I knew they were far, far away from mine. Even with all of this, I felt I had to take this class to boost my GPA, see what our future teachers were being taught, and to defend conservatism and show the true principles of the Republican Party. Through this class I have found that with Molly, I can do all three and so much more...I don't believe that our way is the only way and that is precisely why I needed to hear Molly...I guess this class, above all, has prepared me for a future in politics. I will not be a teacher, but I will respect the hell out of them. I think EPFE 201 has allowed me to look around for those smaller voices. Most people are not looney Liberals and not Reagan Republicans. They are in between. That is where the country lies and that is where I hope to get this country one day.

Colin (C): If there is one thing that this class has taught me it is to open my eyes and think more critically, to question people if I do not understand or if I do not agree with them, and to appreciate what others see and stand behind. You do not necessarily have to agree with them but be accepting to what they have to say regardless. I think that both units in the course were very effective at getting their respective message across.

Eric (B): This class and many of the students in there have views that contradict my own, but I did enjoy it because it showed me how other people think, and it helped me gain a different perspective on life. If you limit yourself to certain points of views you are limiting yourself to the amount of knowledge you can gain in life. I think it was interesting finding out how people think based on how they were raised and in what setting they grew up in. I can say that you made a very friendly atmosphere where I

felt like I could say anything and participate at will. You took all of my comments seriously and I felt like I really contributed to most the discussions.

Kathryn (C): The way that the class was taught allowed me to voice my opinions, even if my opinions did not always reflect the class as a whole, and I enjoyed that. I did not feel as if I needed the support of my classmates in order to say what I wanted, but I knew that they were listening when I spoke.

I strive to create safe spaces for all students to participate, regardless of difference. Sometimes I feel as though I am on a tight rope, delicately balancing different perspectives, including my own. When students who claim to have different views than mine, express that they enjoyed hearing other's perspectives and felt as though they could voice their own perspectives, I feel as though I managed to stay balanced on the tight rope. This does not always happen; students in this study who did not feel comfortable expressing themselves in class will be discussed later in this chapter.

A Loving Learning Environment

Many students wrote about how they enjoyed the learning environment of the class. Garrett claimed he wants to create a similar environment when he becomes a teacher. Carly discussed how the loving environment helped her feel safe away from home. Ebony, David, Jose, Jamal, and Reggie wrote about how the classroom environment helped them feel comfortable expressing their views:

Garrett (C): My experience in class was very helpful with me becoming a teacher. I know more teaching philosophies, and I've experienced a class where connections are made from class to current events. I hope that I will be able to do the same one day. I really enjoyed this semester because the classroom environment was low stress, and it was for college students. We weren't treated like we were experts in the field or like we were in kindergarten. The classroom felt like a bunch of people getting together

and talking which I think made it easier to learn. I just want to tell you, Molly, that you've done a great job and keep up the good work!

Carly (B): If you love the content you are teaching, it will better educate the person you are teaching. That theory really stood out to me because it rubs off on me as a student as to what I do and don't have interest in. I love that the teacher truly loves and stands by what she teaches, because I can definitely connect with her and understand everything she is teaching me. Students such as me love to be in a setting away from home where I know I am safe in a loving learning environment. I never had a problem coming to talk to the teacher about anything, or just have to have a nice casual conversation with.

Ebony (A): The course title, Education as an Agent for Change, truly embodies the full meaning of the class. The purpose of this class is to understand how what we learn should not only benefit us but be an instrument in bringing about change in the world. Specifically about this course, I loved the atmosphere of the class. I really appreciate the fact that we can speak freely and respectfully express our opinions. Molly does an amazing job of making her students feel comfortable. The love that she exhibits for her job really shines through and is very genuine. Molly is an inspiration. Regardless of your major, she inspired you to be passionate about what you do. She is very devoted to her students. This cannot be said about many teachers. I am glad that I was able to experience this class with her as my instructor.

David (A): First of all, I really enjoyed your class. I loved the energy you would bring to class each and every day, which truly kept my attention for all two and a half hours. I honestly cannot say that about any other class I have taken here at NIU. I liked the laid-back atmosphere of the class. Another part I liked about EPFE 201 was the openness of the class and the encouragement to get involved in discussions. It helped to see multiple points of view in the topics we discussed, which was interesting. I feel like I learned a lot from your class and it was a great experience for me. I will probably remember it forever.

Jose (B): I honestly can say that this is the best course I have taken at NIU because I felt comfortable and cared for throughout the entire course. It is really hard for me to express my true personality among my classmates and professors because I don't feel safe or respected. This course helped me express my personality in order to reach my full potential academically, socially, and personally. Not only did it help me to express but to embrace as well.

Jamal (B): The course really allowed me to be able to express myself as a student and not be afraid to give an open opinion on something, where in most classes, professors tend to put a limit on how students can interact with one another. In my opinion, that is why students don't come to class, because they have a limit on what they can do.

With this course, the professor relates to her students and takes time to get to know each student without any type of hesitation. This course has allowed me to give my thoughts and beliefs without having to worry about being judged by my professor and other classmates.

Reggie (B): I believe you take special care in creating a safe environment in which the negative effects of alienation are minimized through group activities, something lacking in the science and math departments as a whole. This is greatly appreciated and I thank you.

The student testimony regarding the classroom environment I created shines light on one of my gifts as a teacher. I believe the reason I am able to create an open and accepting environment is that I genuinely love my students as fellow human beings, and I am on a quest for mutual humanization.

Care, Love, and Compassion in Education

I believe I am a very caring, loving, and compassionate person, and students indicated these were important aspects of my pedagogy. I talked in class about how modeling compassion, not just talking about it, is fundamental when teaching for social change. In other words, what we do may be more powerful than what we say. Tiara, Ryan, James, John, and Allison wrote about how I care about students:

Tiara (B): In society it's not often people come across teachers that they absolutely love, especially in college. Molly Swick is a teacher that I absolutely love. She genuinely cares not only about teaching, but about her students as well. Free spirited, loving, open-minded, risk-taker, motivator, and humanist are some terms that describe Molly. These are also terms that describe me, and it is very rare that we both share these qualities. Whatever a student is going through, whether she can relate to it or not, Molly tries her hardest to accommodate that student in whatever way she can. Her classes involved student interaction where students can express anything they are feeling without being judged. This type of learning is very positive, and I wish all teachers would be open to this learning atmosphere.

Ryan (A): I would hope and pray that there are more teachers out there that are as caring for their students as Ms. Swick was. And that's not sucking up. She genuinely cares what a person says and what they do in their life. That is a rare quality among teachers. It is a rare quality in human beings.

James (A): I really enjoyed this course. You are probably the only college professor that I have ever had that truly cares about your students. I had a few in high school, but it was really nonexistent in college. You brought a smile to every class, even when you were annoyed by some people in class. For instance, when you had the women-only discussion and some of the guys were about to cry, you still smiled. You made it easy to come to class and I commend you for it. There are not many professors in the same boat as you, if any.

John (B): I could honestly say that I felt closer to her [Molly] than any of my other professors. But she wasn't a professor to me, she was a guide, a human being caring a lot and taking names. It's this kind of teacher that makes all these years of school enjoyable.

Allison (C): I really enjoyed the enthusiasm of the teacher, Molly. When someone teaching is passionate, happy, and cares about their students, it makes you happy and want to actually be there, too.

DeShawn claimed I helped him care about the Iraq War:

DeShawn (A): You made me care about something, you made me care about the war. The DVD paper made me really think about it, because I did not feel an impact directly from it. You continued to dig deep and you made us care....Molly, when you speak, we listen, and because you speak from the heart, it makes it that much easier for us to listen.

Tiara and Michelle moved beyond care and compassion in their summaries and talked about my ability to love students:

Tiara (B): Not many teachers, or many people, embrace the word love. Love is something that I have been given my whole life, and it touches my heart to know that a teacher genuinely loves all of her students.

Michelle (B): My first assignment was to write about what love means to me. This is how Molly became my "love teacher." Molly made me feel very comfortable, and created a very safe, nonjudgmental learning environment....It was also refreshing to have a teacher who is so passionate about what is being taught.

All I want to be when I grow up is the “love teacher!” Thank you Michelle!

Support for Passionate Pedagogy

Many students indicated that they enjoyed the passion I bring to the classroom. I specifically created this section to counter a student resister’s distaste for passionate pedagogy, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Maria, Terrell, Hannah, and Jake, on the other hand, wrote about how they enjoyed the passion I bring to the classroom:

Maria (A): As for Education as an Agent for Change, I can honestly say it was one of the best classes I’ve ever taken. I have never met a teacher with so much passion for what she does and what she believes in. This class had made me think more critically about things that actually matter and things everyone should know about.

Terrell (B): My experience in this class has been wonderful. I have learned way more things than I thought I would have. From day one, I had a feeling this would be a great class because I did not think professors had energy in their classes like you had. To tell the truth, I have never had a class like yours that just caught my attention right off the bat. I never thought about some of the things we talked about, I never had conversations in class like we had.

Hannah (C): This class was by far my favorite class I have ever taken both in high school and college! Your passion and enthusiasm makes it easy to get into the class and topic we are discussing. I had some rough patches personally this semester, and your class always cheered me up because you were always in such a great mood. I learned more in EPFE than I felt like I learned in all my other classes combined. The information was always presented in a way that made it very interesting and captivating. I am very passionate about becoming a teacher, and I feel it is what I am meant to do in my life, and you are a great teacher to look up to.

Jake (C): This course was a wonderful addition to my list of completed courses. I have never seen such an enthusiastic teacher about what he/she is teaching until I met Molly Swick. To be completely honest, this class was really easy, but it made the most impact on me than any other class has even come close. If I could, I would enroll in this class again in a heartbeat just to see if I missed anything the first time. Thank you Molly for teaching me many new ways to shape my philosophy of education.

I do not want to alienate students, and I have thought about toning my energy and comments down. I address social justice issues in a frank manner, where I say it like I see it, and I use popular language without sugarcoating issues. As indicated earlier, when I described the course included in this study, I veer from political correctness, and I use profanities sometimes. Trevon, Xavier, and Demetrius urged me not to change my pedagogy:

Trevon (A): I don't think anything should be changed. Your teaching style is great-please don't change it!

Xavier (A): Most teachers won't dare teach a class the way you teach it or say the things you do. I like the fact that you keep it real with us and let us do the same back. Whether it may hurt you or help, it was great for you to let everyone hear different peoples' true feelings. I think you are an amazing teacher who teaches an amazing class. And I suggest that you just keep doing what you do and love to teach these kids and you will keep making a difference in peoples' lives as well as yourselves.

Demetrius (A): Keep teaching the way you do. I am so happy to find out that there are teachers like you out here in the world today and that hopefully there will be more of them in the future. I had a really great time with you as my teacher. Who would have ever thought that learning could be this fun. Well, I guess it can when you have a carefree, open-hearted, loving, joyful, cheerful, outgoing teacher like yourself. Take care, Molly.

Appreciation from Students

Although not formally in the assignment guidelines for the course summary, many students took the opportunity to express appreciation of my pedagogy. The following quotes from Josh, Jazmine, and Tiara are examples:

Josh (A): Anyways, Molly, I have to say you are probably one of the best teachers I have had in a long time. Definitely in the top three of all the college professors/teachers I have had! I just want to thank you for teaching me it's okay to loosen up in the classroom and the classroom should be a memorable experience each and every day a student walks into that room. This class was always exciting to come to, and I actually stayed awake in your class! Molly, I also loved how compassionate you were

with everyone when talking about the topic of war, and the whole time doing this, you still stuck to your beliefs.

Jazmine (B): I had a great experience in this course. I thank you sincerely for that. Thanks for teaching us to think outside the box. Thanks for teaching us to ask questions, as opposed to just going with the flow of life. Thanks for reminding us that learning can be fun, even in college. Thanks for no test, and I say that with assurance that I did still retain all that I have learned in your EPFE course. Thanks for providing me with an even bigger urge to use education as an agent for change.

Tiara (B): Thank you Molly for teaching me how important education is for changing individually, as well as the world. I am forever grateful for your knowledge, peace, and love. Good luck on the rest of your life journey! You have truly inspired me.

Up to this point, I have presented student data supporting my implementation of Freireian pedagogy. I described what Freireian concepts resonated with students, as well as overall themes from student course summaries. The intent was to lay the foundation for analyzing student resistance. I felt it was important for the reader to understand that most students truly enjoy my classroom pedagogy. While there are only a small number of students who I perceive do not enjoy my class, I think it is important for me to try and understand why, as well as determine if I should make pedagogical changes so as to not alienate future students. The following section deals specifically with perceived student resistance.

Student Resistance

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of aspiring to incorporate Freire's ideas in my classroom has been student resistance. When I perceive a student adamantly opposes most, if not all, of my pedagogy, I call him or her a "resister." One of my objectives in analyzing student resistance is to develop a better understanding of this resistance, reflect on it, and

make changes in my pedagogy. My ultimate goal is to improve my pedagogy and alienate fewer students in my future social justice education endeavors.

There are different forms and intensities of student resistance. For this study, I differentiate student “topic resisters” and “general resisters” to my implementation of Freire’s ideas and theories. In this section, I present specific examples from course summaries and my journal entries to help the reader understand the resistance, as well as my interpretation of the resistance. I include resisters from Classes A, B, and C, as well as resisters from other semesters, which I put into one group called Class Z. In Chapter VI, I analyze student resistance further and provide strategies for handling resistance in a social justice classroom.

Topic Resisters

I refer to students who resist during specific topics, but seem to remain open to most other ideas presented as topic resisters, and students who seem to resist my overall pedagogy as general resisters. Topic resisters do not seem to cause problems for me, especially if they have demonstrated open-mindedness in previous lessons. For example, Cody supported Freire’s idea of problem-posing education, but did not support Freire’s idea of love in education:

Cody (C): I think you should do more with Paulo Freire. His concept of problem-posing education really resonated with me. Paulo Freire was able to put into words and concepts the things that I have been thinking about for a long time but was unable to solidify into a coherent concept. I did not agree with his idea that in order to teach you must love your students. I think you must certainly respect your students because this allows you to be open to their ideas and experiences. Although I do not agree with Paulo Freire’s ideas about love, I find them fascinating, and they raise many interesting questions in my own life, which I think is part of the point of education.

Cody was a topic resister because he was able to remain open to learning even if he disagreed with the premise of the lesson. His ability to embrace other concepts made it easy to handle his resistance to love in education. He continued:

Cody (C): I enjoyed this class immensely, and I will recommend it to all my friends. I really enjoyed your energy and your honesty. I really felt like your class was a place where people could express their opinions freely even if you disagreed with them. I felt that your class was a place where a real dialogue about difficult issues could take place. When you said that many of the things that are going to be talked about in class would make me uncomfortable, you were right. I am glad that you made me uncomfortable even though sometimes it really bothered me. I think that people need to be taken outside of their comfort zone, and sometimes the most learning happens this way. I have learned a lot about many different subjects in your class, and I have learned about myself as well. I want you to know that if nothing else, you have reached one student and touched his life in a positive way, thank you.

I enjoyed having Cody in class, and we had great conversations throughout the semester. I seem to be capable of mediating conflicting views or misconceptions with topic resisters unless the student catches me off guard, or as I say, “Throws me a curve ball.” When this happens, I occasionally respond defensively, but this situation is rare.

General Resisters

General resisters, on the other hand, have created frustrating teaching experiences for me throughout the years. Of the typical 120 student load per semester, I usually perceive two to four general resisters. Most general resistance I have encountered has been from politically and socially conservative White students; resisters are usually male, but I have felt resistance from several White females. Sometimes the resistance is overt and expressed in classroom discussions. Other times the resistance is expressed in student writings, such as in their course summaries and course evaluations.

In Class A used in this study, comments in student summaries seemed to contradict each other. Justin described the class dynamics:

Justin (A): Like I said earlier in our after class talk, this class has all different types. As you said, resisters and people like me who dove right into your teaching style. Know-it-alls who had a story for everything (often stories which didn't have anything to do with the subject matter) and people who never said a word until the DVD presentation. Veterans and civilians, radicals and liberals, conservatives and shut ins. Black, White, Asian, Indian. Amazingly we never had a brawl. Honestly, I never would have guessed I had so much in common with all of these people, it's really cool. While I've always gotten along with people not cut from my cloth, I guess I would consider it more a matter of tolerance than acceptance and understanding.

Chris, Courtney, and Xavier argued that multiple perspectives were encouraged and all voices could be heard:

Chris (A): You made sure to show multiple viewpoints and ideas, allowed all students to speak their minds, and were very courteous of all opinions. I found this to be the best part of the course, and I strongly recommend you keep on doing this until you retire.

Courtney (A): The class was really enjoyable for a person like me, who agreed with just about everything we discussed, but I think the class was also quite enjoyable for students whose viewpoints were quite different. I liked the way Molly balanced sharing her opinions and hearing others'. Often, teachers try and play a neutral card to offend the least amount of people, but I prefer when teachers do as Molly did, and not only make their view known, but truly listen to other viewpoints.

Xavier (A): Hearing other peoples stories about what happened in their past that was wrong brought to my attention that some of the struggles I go through, we have all been through in some kind of way. I think that in doing this, it made me a better listener than what I was before. I thought the debates are what brought everyone together and brought others not-so-close together, but the important thing was that everyone had a voice in the classroom. Although, it was the same people talking at times, anyone was able to jump in and share their opinions with whatever was going on. So I like that no one was left out.

Robert was also in Class A, and I am not sure if he was a topic resister or a general resister because he seemed to enjoy class some days, while not other days. He was very vocal

(probably one of the students Justin described as telling stories unrelated to content); however, Robert did not seem to share Chris's, Courtney's, and Xavier's belief that multiple viewpoints were welcomed in class. I noticed after three weeks that a handful of White male students, including Robert, were dominating the class discussions. I decided to conduct an experiment and for an entire class period, I only allowed the females in the class to contribute to the class discussion. Robert was a dominant White male and did not appear to like the point I was trying to make. He also claimed that it wasn't just that class period where he felt uncomfortable:

Robert (A): I also felt uncomfortable for most of the class periods. During class discussions where the men were not allowed to talk, I was called out for shaking my head. I don't know if it was part of the "experiment" to "oppress" me for my actions, but it wasn't clear that it was part of your experiment. If I wasn't allowed to disagree with your comments, I don't think that is very fair. Even if I did disagree with your comments, I wouldn't be able to explain my disagreement because the men were being oppressed in your experiment. I found it also unusual that the women were not oppressed the next day. So I felt that I was being singled out for the whole group of men in the class.

I wonder how Robert would have responded if I was a male teacher. My recollection of Robert is that he had a tone of sexism in his personality. Having a female teacher may have already challenged his idea of gender-power relations. When I decided to only allow women to speak for a day, he seemed furious. Deep-seated ideas of gender roles are difficult to address, especially when I am the teacher and have power over grades. While I attempt to break down hierarchies between teacher and student, I am ultimately the one with the most power in a classroom. If Robert already struggled with this gender-role dynamic, I imagine my lesson to encourage women to speak was very difficult for him.

In Class C used in this study, I had what I perceived as one of the angriest general resisters in all of my career teaching. As a result of trying to understand student resistance, I chose to include this particular section. It was an atypical class racially, composed of predominately White students. Of the 37 students enrolled, 28 were White, with an even number of White males and females. There were only three Black students, five Latino students, and one Indian American student. Class C had a significantly larger-than-average number of politically and socially conservative students, and I took these unusual dynamics into account when planning lessons (or at least I thought I did), as well as choosing what language to use and what stories to tell. The students seemed to acknowledge my efforts of inclusion and acceptance, and by the end of the semester, I seemed to reach all but Nick, the general resister. Mike and Adam wrote:

Mike (C): My first impression of Molly was a negative one. She seemed very outwardly liberal. This bothered me. However, as the semester went on, I found that she is a very open-minded individual. She is not a typical ideologue. This separates her from most professors I've had....Someone who believes something so strongly that they fail to see their opponent's viewpoint seems shallow to me. Molly is different. I respect her more than most professors who teach their political views.

Adam (C): I felt at times that the views expressed in the class were biased towards only one side of the arguments. I think the class would benefit from more than one view point being taught. However, because we got into so many group and full class discussions, I still felt that every opinion in class was expressed. This was one of the best classes that I have ever taken and I would say that is because of the set-up of the class. I learned so much about the world around me and most of the information was very good and useful.

Amy and Tom supported my implementation of Freire's ideas:

Amy (C): I thought that this class has true meaning, and what we learn in our class, we can apply in our lives and try and make a change. To be honest, I think this class should be requirement to graduate. Everyone should know who Paulo Freire is, we should know what hegemony is, or even White privilege. This is definitely a class I

didn't mind going to. I enjoyed hearing what everyone had to say, and I liked it when people felt comfortable – even passionate – enough to disagree with what others are saying.

Tom (C): I think one of the greatest things about the course is how you implement Freire's method of the teacher as facilitator and have so many open discussions because this allows so many voices to be heard. I truly think this course has caused me to be a better person. It opened my eyes to many different views of many different people from many different backgrounds.

Nick, on the other hand, had a different take on my pedagogy. The second week of class, Nick said to me, "I am always suspect of people with passion." I wasn't sure what that meant, but responded with a big smile, and said something like, "Ah, come on Nick, you may end up loving my passion." The following class period, I approached Nick and asked him why he was suspect of people with passion. He replied (paraphrasing), "People with passion can believe too strongly in something and close their mind off of other ideas." I responded with a genuine smile, "Good point, but don't mistake my passion for lack of open-mindedness." I continued to feel resistance from Nick throughout the semester, but thought I could overcome the obstacle by trying to be sensitive, open, and honest. It did not seem to work. In his course summary, Nick wrote:

Nick (C): I entered this class with high hopes for a class that would discuss difficult issues in an open forum where ideas could be presented freely. This has not been the case in my experience. This has been a very frustrating class for me as a whole. It has nothing to do with the fact that I do disagree with much of what has been said, but how poorly dissenting opinions in the class were treated. Instead of being a class where everyone was edified, all this class was the pounding of Molly's view points as the only correct way to think.

Nick then attacked my implementation of Freire's ideas:

Nick (C): I believe Molly wants to be like Freire, but is nowhere near there yet. There was no open dialog in class. Dissenting opinions were treated very poorly in class, in my opinion. Often when Molly presented an issue to the class she would back it up

with whatever information she had. If anyone in the class voiced something that was not in harmony, she would immediately follow up with how they were wrong and maybe present the same evidence again hoping this would sway people from voicing their mind. If someone publicly agreed with Molly, she would smile and nod and say something like, “Wow that’s a really good point, let’s talk about that some more.” This style of presentation makes dissenters feel unwelcome.

Ouch! Can I write that in a dissertation? Referencing the unit on Using Mass Media and Popular Culture as an Agent for Change, Nick wrote:

Nick (C): The class was spent railing against Fox News for being too conservative, but saying they were presenting a balanced opinion... Molly kept the focus on the evils of Fox News. This was just incredibly frustrating. One cannot say that one network is evil for its biases and yet completely ignore the biases of the preferred networks.

Finally, Nick claimed I made a comment (that I do not believe I made) during our discussion of the Iraq War:

Nick (C): On to my issue with how the Iraq War was presented. It was when we were talking about this issue that Molly made the most ludicrous unbacked statement I have ever heard uttered in academia. This was that “all critical thinkers know the Iraq War is unjust.” I was, and am still, livid about this.

The lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity in Class C was unlike any other I can remember at my university, and I definitely took those dynamics into consideration when teaching. Interestingly, it was one of those classes where there were five or seven very vocal students, and when one of the vocal students was absent, the chemistry of the class changed, which, in turn, completely altered the tone and purpose of classroom dialogue. Nick missed class a few times; however, when he was there, he continued to contribute to class discussions; although as the semester proceeded, I noticed he participated less and less. A major problem for me was that the rest of the class was positively amazing, insightful, unusually engaged, and a genuinely enjoyable group to teach! Early in the semester, we

established many differences among the students and myself, and I stated many times that my objective was not to make them think like I do, but to expose them to different ideas, people, cultures, and ways of thinking. Fortunately, other students in Class C, including Conner, Jenna, Amy, and Brett encouraged me not to change who I am, nor change how I teach:

Conner (C): There really isn't anything that did not fit unto the class and I don't think there should be anything dropped from the course. It was a fun-filled semester where we seemed to learn something new each and every week. Molly, I really like the amount of passion you have put into the class – there was not one day where I didn't feel like going. The class was more of an experience rather than a class. I really never looked at this class as a chore like the rest of them. More classes should be as structured as this one, and more teachers need to be as passionate about teaching as you are.

Jenna (C): Honestly, I would not change anything about this class. It is by far the most beneficial class I have taken all four years I have been here. Thank you again for making this class so much fun and so worth the time! I would take this class again in a heartbeat if I could.

Amy (C): I would recommend this class stay as it is. This class is not a hard class. I think that we should be extremely grateful for how Molly has set this class up. This is every college student's dream class. Little work, and you take information that is useful to your life. Overall, I just think that if you don't walk away from this class inspired to make a change in your life or in someone else's life, then you haven't learned anything. That is what this class is about – taking what you learn and making a change.

Brett (C): Just promise that you won't ever change how you teach because you're awesome. Your enthusiasm and passion come out when you teach, and I knew from the very first day that you absolutely loved to teach. As long as you don't let anyone or anything change the way you teach, you will make a difference in the world.

Nick was the only student in Class C who wrote in his course summary that he did not enjoy his experience in EPFE 201; in fact, other students indicated personal transformation as a result of their experiences. Nevertheless, Nick's course summary was extremely disconcerting, and I will reflect on it in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Class Z

General resisters have challenged my confidence in my pedagogy and can turn a single class into a dreaded aspect of my day. Early in my implementation of Freire's ideas, I realized that the more comfortable I became with rejecting teacher neutrality, the more I seemed to alienate socially and politically conservative students. I have been on a quest to understand why my personality and pedagogy seem to resonate with most students, yet anger some. Perhaps this quest is the strongest motivating force behind writing this dissertation. I began journaling about these experiences several years ago, usually in the form of letters to specific students, which I include in this section, along with student resister course summaries. The intent is to help me understand student resistance and improve my pedagogy. I refer to all student resisters not enrolled in Class A, B, or C as part of Class Z. The following is an excerpt from my journal:

Oh Mary (Z),

She challenged me from day one. As a returning student she was well-traveled, smart, and older than I. Honestly, I am not sure where she stands on issues. She would swing left then swing right. She actually had decent contributions to the class discussions for the first month of class, but I started noticing a progression. She took advantage of my "open and free" classroom and started using it as a podium of dissent.

Mary loved to argue with me or make inappropriate comments every day. I started hating that class. I was relieved any day she was absent. Six weeks into the course we watched the film *Crash*, and dialogued about the word, "Nigger." The dialogue was intense and exciting.

One Black student said he, "hated it when his Black friends called him 'nigger.'" A Black female said, "I cannot stand that word. We should stop using it all together." Mary piped in, "Yeah, we should eliminate the word. If we accept it, then next thing you know everybody will be calling their babies niggers." Then she cradled her arms saying, "Oh, little nigger, Oh, little nigger." It was ten minutes before class was over.

I stewed for two days and could not stop thinking about Mary's offensive comment. I was so angry that I allowed Mary to end an amazing dialogue with a ridiculous comment. I did not know how to handle the situation with Mary. We were only six weeks into the semester, and I felt I had lost control of my loving environment. I plotted the response for the next class. I decided to approach the issue by facilitating a dialogue about the difference between a debate and a dialogue; in a debate, the objective is to win, which implies that there is always a loser. My class is based on dialogue, unity, and understanding difference and otherness. So, I gave a ten-minute explanation on the difference between a debate and a dialogue and argued that in my class, I promoted dialogue, not debate, when striving to understand each other's differences. It's not better or worse, just different. That seemed to ease some of the tension, but I dreaded teaching that class for the rest of the semester.

Several times I have discovered a student resister at the end of the semester through course summaries. One semester, Stephan (Z) submitted a course summary that baffled me. I knew he identified as a libertarian and had strong antigovernment sentiments. However, I did not realize that his experiences in class were so unfulfilling; although Stephan was quiet in class, he was always friendly to me and other classmates. In Stephan's course summary, he indicated that the class was definitely not a good fit for him:

Stephan (Z): I just want to start out by saying that this summary is not an attack on you as a person, and I would normally exercise more restraint. However, 10% of my grade apparently depends on me reviewing this course, so here it goes.

I don't think this course was a good fit for me. I just think that our ideas of what a college classroom should be are at opposite ends of the spectrum. I don't really feel like I am taking anything away with me from this course. We spent 50% of the time discussing one person's idea of a few of our world's problems, 49% doing group

work, and then 1% of our time discussing solutions. I didn't really expect much else after you felt the need to divulge your liberal affiliation on the first day of class. I guess I am bothered when a professor uses their classroom to further their political views...we spoke so often in class of people in power using blaming techniques to divide and conquer, yet I felt pretty divided at the end of the day.

Stephen then compared Education as an Agent for Change to his calculus class:

Stephan (Z): It is hard not to compare this to my calculus class. I feel like we spent way too much time doing group work, and there was actually no expectation to actually pick up and learn the material. At the end of the semester, I have a sense of accomplishment in my calculus class for having mastered topics like vectors and integration techniques. Yet in this class, I don't really know what I did besides mostly talk about topics that are relevant to a select few. I just think that this environment would be better suited for clubs/organizations.

Ouch again! Stephan then argued that professors should have all knowledge of the content and should transmit that knowledge through lectures. He liked banking education and did not think my method of problem-posing education belonged in higher education:

Stephan (Z): I would prefer it if we were taught material that was difficult to understand on our own. I like banking education because my professors can pass on to me knowledge that can't be learned anywhere else. As a student, I appreciate and expect my professor to pass on as much information as they can in the very limited amount of time that we have together.

I can usually recognize resisters early on, so I was quite shocked and saddened when I read Stephan's summary. Interestingly, in his last paragraph, he indicated that he was inspired to take a bigger role in changing government:

Stephan (Z): This class has allowed me to further examine a perspective that I still don't quite understand. Though we don't always have to agree with everybody, it is important to let others explain themselves. And while I don't really feel like this class gave us an open forum for debate, it has still helped to inspire me to assume a bigger role within my government to stop the older generations from robbing the younger generations blind.

One semester, I immediately felt resistance from Sarah (Z) who was a student in teacher education. I attempted to make her feel welcome and safe expressing opinions in class. Sarah stayed after class every day and talked with me about what we discussed in class. We had great conversations, and I listened to her opinions. Sarah was very vocal during class discussions, and I made extra efforts to help her feel as though her perspective mattered. I thought I had successfully handled the resistance until I read Sarah's course summary. I was very upset, and wrote the following letter to her in my journal:

Dear Sarah (Z),

The final paper that you submitted was the most offensive paper I have ever received in my 15 years of teaching. I spent four months reaching out to you with sincere love. I always respected your lived experiences. I made an extra effort to make sure you felt wanted, loved, appreciated, and valued.

Personally attacking me and claiming that the course was a "waste of your time" is not only disrespectful, it is unprofessional and unacceptable. All good teachers can find value in every learning experience.

I never gave you grief for coming in 10 minutes late for virtually every class, which means you actually missed 1/5 of the course, not to mention the most important part of class when I present the advanced organizer and make connections and corrections to previous classes. How can you make sweeping judgments when you missed so much? The class was not "mostly focused on politics and the war." If you remember, we spent the first half of the semester talking about the purpose of education, educational philosophies, love, values, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, and mass media as an agent for change.

I have always believed that if I respect a student, he or she will respect me. This is clearly not the case with our relationship. I bent over backwards to help you feel welcome in class and in return I was betrayed. I am not interested in continuing any sort of relationship with you. Please do not contact me.

I never sent the letter, and I never saw the student again. I felt blindsided by Sarah's summary; I am not accustomed to sincerely reaching out to a student, believing that I had

been successful at showing her I cared, and then being told my class was a waste of time. I have not reached out to a student resister in the same manner since.

Charles (Z) took resistance to an entirely new level. After the first class, he came up to me and said, “This will be an interesting class since we have opposite views on everything.” This puzzled me, since I didn’t even know Charles. How could he draw that conclusion? After the first week, he stated how surprised he was with my teaching because he felt that all of the other professors were pushing their liberal agendas on him. Charles thanked me for not doing that. I was confident we were going to be able to move beyond our perceived differences until the end of the second week of the semester. I was making a persuasive argument that the morale in the United States was low. I argued that education should play a role in addressing the issue by encouraging teachers to create and embrace a more loving learning environment conducive to addressing issues of injustice.

During the last ten minutes of class, students were working in groups analyzing the lyrics of the song “Where is the Love?” by the Black Eyed Peas. I noticed that Charles was not participating, so I said, “You’re awfully quiet today. Is everything okay?” In a very angry tone that escalated to almost a yell, Charles (Z) preceded to make the following comments, which I have paraphrased from my journal:

Charles (Z):

You do not do what you write about.

You went against everything you say in your paper. You say you believe in that guy... what’s his name? Freire? Yet, you do nothing that he recommends (As he was saying this, he was holding my reading packet and hitting it with the back of his hand). Thankfully, I have faith that this class is smart enough to know that your opinion is not the only opinion because you were over the top.

You never gave us an opportunity to argue against your claims. How can you say you believe in this guy and then give a lesson like you just did?

I tried to explain to Charles that the purpose of the lesson was to establish that our morale is low, that we can address this by creating a loving learning environment, and that we would have opportunities to dialogue about the issues raised in future lessons. However, that explanation did not seem to work, and he continued making personal attacks on my character. After about five minutes, the other students were clearly concerned. I was unable to finish the activity, and said, "Okay, we'll continue this discussion on Friday." I was obviously shaken up. Another student approached me, and said, "I just want you to know that every time I come to your class, you make my day. And I just want to thank you." The student then gave me a hug.

The exchange with Charles (Z) caught me off guard. I had never been challenged with such disrespectful language during class. Fortunately, it happened at the end of the class period so I was able to reflect on the situation. Charles never came back and ended up dropping the class. I don't know exactly what I said that pushed him over the edge. Was it my reference to the unjust economic gap between the rich and poor, my statement about the U.S. judicial system being racist and classist, the argument that disparities in education make meritocracy and the American dream unattainable for many, or my argument that the Iraq War was a glaring implementation of the military industrial complex's war for profit motive and world dominance? It was probably the latter. Regardless, it was the first openly disrespectful resistance I had ever encountered.

Formal Teaching Observation

The purpose of including a formal teaching observation was to determine if my colleagues' perception of my implementation of Freire's ideas complemented or contradicted my students' perceptions. Presenting perspectives of colleagues hopefully strengthens the validity of this study. My formal teaching observation took place approximately halfway through the semester. I facilitated a team meeting on Paulo Freire. Several themes emerged from the written evaluation by the two professors who observed me teach, including a welcoming learning environment, the use of a variety of teaching strategies, an organized and clearly implemented lesson, and recommendations to strengthen my pedagogy. The data from the entire two-page written evaluation are included in this section. The professors began by describing how I started the lesson, including how I arranged the desks:

On the day that we visited, Ms. Swick organized the desks into groups so that student teams could discuss and work on their projects. At the beginning of the class, she welcomed the students and made a few announcements. The students seemed interested and happy to be there and ready to begin the class. After these announcements, Ms. Swick left so that we could talk with the students. When Ms. Swick returned, she discussed some plans for the next assignment/group project and then got the class started on the day's lesson.

I was pleased that the professors recognized my attempts to create a learning environment to promote dialogue, including how I had arranged the desks and how I welcomed students.

From the conversation the professors had with the students while I was outside of the classroom, they wrote about how the students expressed their appreciation of the open learning environment that I had created, as well as my enthusiasm while teaching:

Students repeatedly said that they enjoy the class and appreciate Ms. Swick's skills and enthusiasm as an instructor. She has an excellent rapport with the students in the

class. It is clear that she has created an environment where students feel welcome and able to discuss their ideas and thoughts. This environment can facilitate important discussions and interactions.

The professors noted that my use of multiple teaching strategies was valued by students and that they indicated my pedagogy led to exciting lessons. Students reported that the syllabus and assignment guidelines helped them have a clear understanding of expectations:

Ms. Swick incorporates a variety of instructional strategies in the class, including group work, lectures and discussions, videos, and projects. Students appreciate this variety and the way it leads to lively class sessions. Additionally, Ms. Swick's syllabus is clear on expectations and assignments, and the detailed daily outlines give students a sense of overall direction of the course.

The students indicated to the observing professors that the day they came to visit was a typical day. The professors described my lesson, as well as how I implemented it:

Ms. Swick had clearly planned the day in a thoughtful way, in what students said was a typical schedule of mini-lectures and group work. Her instructions for the team projects and meetings were clear, direct, and to the point. On the day we visited, she had students work in teams to think about Paulo Freire and his conception of education as an agent for change. She asked them to outline the key concepts and then apply those concepts to a real-world situation. As the teams were working, she walked around to answer questions. And, as some teams began to finish up, she asked them to address additional questions and to think more deeply about Freire. It was a well-designed activity to help students make sense of Freire's ideas.

The written evaluation included recommendations for improving my pedagogy, including providing opportunities for a group discussion on the findings from the team meeting on Paulo Freire,

As part of this activity, it would have been useful to have the groups report back to the class as a whole with their examples of how Freire might be applied to real-world situations. It would have been insightful to see the entire class working through the strengths and weaknesses of Freire's ideas. It would also have given Ms. Swick an opportunity to further ensure that the students had mastered Freire's main themes. While she may return to this topic in future classes, there was time at the end of class to start this discussion.

Having groups report back to the entire class is a strategy I intend to implement after all team meetings. Unfortunately, on this particular day, time ran short, and I was unable to include this part of the lesson plan. The professors reminded me of the importance of giving opportunities to have a final discussion on the team meeting to help clarify any misunderstandings of Freire's ideas.

The professors acknowledged my use of mass media in my pedagogy, including videos and music. They also encouraged me to assign readings from additional authors representing different perspectives:

As a general education course, EPFE 201 fulfills interdisciplinary requirements. Ms. Swick includes discussion from philosophy and critical race theory, and she used music and videos as course texts. These approaches are appropriate, but to strengthen this interdisciplinary focus, she should assign readings by more authors. Since this is an interdisciplinary course, students need to see multiple perspectives on topics, and she should reconsider assigning writings that she has authored (or, at least, add more readings from different perspectives and disciplinary traditions). Ms. Swick is the instructor and can share her ideas and interpretations through her lectures and activities.

The final comments written included a summary of my teaching skills, including my creative classroom strategies and my ability to connect with students:

Ms. Swick brings significant talents to the classroom, and students highly appreciate and value her enthusiasm, knowledge, interest in them, and creative approaches to teaching. She has succeeded in creating a course that is thoughtful and well organized and that students like and enjoy.

In this chapter, I have presented data to help address my first three research questions: how have my experiences with Freireian pedagogy informed my educational practices as an instructor of higher education, how do my undergraduate college students react to and reflect on my implementation of Freire's concepts, and how can an analysis of student resistance to

my implementation of Freire's ideas and theories help me develop a more inclusive pedagogy? Though analytical commentary has been woven throughout this chapter, further analysis and implications are expanded on in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER V

DIALOGUE PARTNER: AN ONGOING CONVERSATION ON FREIRE

“In the spirit of Freire’s dream, teachers need to create alliances across cultural communities and class positions that are firmly grounded in a process that can help us overcome our lack of democratic experience through participation, while superseding the irrational and dehumanizing hegemonic forces that prevail.” (Darder, 2002, p. 27)

In this chapter, I present data used to address my final research question: What can be learned from a comparison of my interpretation of Freire’s pedagogy of hope with that of another Freireian educator’s interpretation? The information included in this chapter was gathered from questionnaires, interviews, ongoing dialogue, and classroom observations with my dialogue partner, who I have given the pseudonym Malcolm. I present his personal and professional background and describe his educational philosophy. I explain his understanding of Freire’s ideas, including hegemony and oppression, authentic liberation, lived experiences, racism, and banking verses problem-posing education. I describe Malcolm’s classroom environment, provide examples of curricular choices, and discuss how Freire’s work has impacted his pedagogy. Finally, I include a dialogue we had about student resistance.

Personal and Professional Background

Malcolm is an African American male in his 40s. He claims he was conscious of justice and inequality since childhood. As a Black man, he has experienced racism and

marginalization both personally and professionally throughout his life. His mother grew up in the South, and he was always aware of racism and sexism. Malcolm remembers his sister reading a book on lynching, and that he was horrified with the story. He knew early on that a common practice was for the oppressed to turn around and oppress the oppressor, but he resisted this temptation. As a result, he remembers, “Black folks marginalized and dehumanized me because I didn’t turn around and oppress others. They called me ‘Oreo.’”

Malcolm taught high school English, Language Arts, and African American History for three years before he began his tenure in higher education, where he has been teaching and researching for the past 15 years. He is currently an assistant professor and the program coordinator for Curriculum and Instruction at a midwestern research I university. He is a diversity consultant and a writing workshop facilitator. Malcolm has written numerous publications and presents at several conferences annually.

Curriculum studies, Whiteness studies, social justice education, discourse analysis, multicultural education, urban education, cultural and media studies, media literacy, qualitative methodology and action research, and professional development are all areas of Malcolm’s professional interests. His writings and presentations include analysis of early teaching, struggles tenure-track faculty face tackling conflicts between their careers and private lives, representations of urban teachers, Whiteness in the classroom, and using film to prompt discussions on race.

Philosophy of Education

Malcolm identifies himself as a humanist and a progressive. He believes in helping his students discover the intellectual tools to enable them to pursue their intellectual capabilities. He tries to create a community of learners in his classroom. “Everybody has to be involved in the shaping of a community.” He strives to enlighten students while teaching and agrees with Freire’s quest for mutual humanization. Malcolm claims to be a pragmatic and understands there are multiple ways of dealing with the world. But he argues, “Just because you are pragmatic, doesn’t mean you don’t look at social justice.” He continues, “If you want things to run more smoothly, you help students realize that change takes time.” Malcolm describes his educational philosophy is as follows:

I am an educator dedicated to helping students understand both social justice and the impact of power, privilege, and oppression in education and other social institutions. To do this, I try to engage students in readings and activities that encourage critical questioning of ingrained assumptions and values. Ultimately, education is for liberation of the mind. It is the job of the teacher to help the student hone the skills of critique and interrogation in order to help that student become better at understanding how to identify problems in their contexts, reflect on them, and create actions for change.

Clearly, Malcolm’s philosophy of education aligns with my philosophy, as we both strive to help students understand social justice, incorporate engaged pedagogy, promote critical thinking, believe education can be liberatory, encourage reflection and action, and advocate for education as an agent for social change.

Introduction to Paulo Freire

Malcolm was first introduced to Freire in one of his graduate courses in 1997 when he was assigned to read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *The Politics of Education: Culture Power and Liberation* (1985). During this course, the students also read *Ideology and Curriculum* (1990) by Michael Apple. It was at this time that he starting asking the fundamental question of the purpose of education, as well as gaining an understanding of the importance of pedagogical relevance. As a result of learning about Paulo Freire in graduate school, Malcolm began seeing education “as a tool of the state and as an institution that is shaped by social, economic, and political forces.” I was also introduced to Freire in a graduate course, and his ideas helped me articulate what I believed was the purpose of education. In addition, I believed relevancy was fundamental to learning; however, I did not have the language to articulate its importance until I learned Freire’s pedagogical language.

Classroom Pedagogy

For the first classroom observation, Malcolm conducted a lesson on student assessment. He divided the class into groups and assigned portions of the assessment chapter in their textbook to each group. After about 20 minutes, he created groups with one person from each of the previous group who was then assigned to teach the new group their portion of the chapter. He then facilitated a class discussion on the group findings. After the break, Malcolm had the following Freireian concepts written on the board: oppression, reflection, action, praxis, banking, problem-posing, and liberation. He facilitated a dialogue about Freire

and the concepts he presented. The second classroom observation took place approximately three weeks later. During this class period, Malcolm facilitated a dialogue on race, racism, racial identity, and Whiteness. He prompted students with questions pertaining to race, showed film clips, and engaged students in dialogue related to the films shown.

When I first walked in to Malcolm's classroom, I immediately noticed he had music playing. The students were engaged in casual conversation, and he was preparing his lesson. The atmosphere was relaxed and comfortable, and the students seemed genuinely happy to be there. It was an upper-level undergraduate class of pre-service teachers. Most of the students had already completed their student teaching. From the moment he started, the students were interested and engaged. He welcomed them and described the lesson plan for the evening. He used humor and was incredibly respectful of the students. I could tell immediately that he respected them. He started off with a jigsaw group activity by clearly stating the expectations and asking the students if they needed any clarification.

The topic was assessments, and I never thought a lesson on this topic could be so engaging. He facilitated the dialogue like a champ. Building on student comments, keeping the dialogue moving in a positive direction, asking for clarification, and striving for relevance were aspects of his pedagogy totally consistent with Freire's pedagogical ideas. Malcolm was humble. At one point he said, "I don't have all the answers." I felt as though I was watching a male teacher version of myself, only he seemed more laid back.

After the break, Malcolm had the following Freireian concepts on the board: oppression, reflection, action, praxis, banking, problem-posing, and liberation. After discussing the concepts, he played a clip from the film *Freedom Writers*. He asked the

students, “What did the teacher do right?” “What did the teacher do wrong?” Again, I felt as though I was watching myself. He then asked the students, “Who feels oppressed?” Malcolm told stories. He engaged the students. Practically every student participated. The entire experience felt so Freireian!

The subsequent class I observed was consistently Freireian. Dialogue was central to his pedagogy. Critical analysis was incorporated throughout the lessons. During the second observation, Malcolm asked the students, “Why is it difficult to have conversations about race?” “How comfortable are you talking about race?” “When did you realize you were White?” “When was the last time you saw a movie about slavery?” “Where are you in the racial identity development stage?” “What privileges do White people have?” He stated, “It’s hard work to improve your racial identity. It takes on-going effort.” I went up to him after class and told him I thought it was amazing how he facilitated the dialogue on race and how impressed I was with the classroom environment. Malcolm responded, “If people do not feel comfortable, if people do not feel respected, they will not learn from you.”

Freire’s Ideas and Theories

In the questionnaire that Malcolm completed, I asked him to identify Freireian ideas and theories that resonated with his educational philosophy, as well as what Freireian concepts he believed to be relevant to the North American classroom. In subsequent interviews and conversations, Malcolm clarified and expanded on his interpretation of hegemony, oppression, authentic liberation, respecting lived experiences, racism, banking,

and problem-posing education. In the following sections, I present Malcolm's responses regarding the Freireian ideas and theories that resonated with him.

Hegemony and Oppression

When I asked Malcolm about hegemony and oppression, he agreed with Freire's assertion that hegemonic policies have resulted in the oppression of people in the United States. He stated Freire's theory of oppression was the most important concept he learned from reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and claimed:

Chapter 1 alone, the theorizing of oppression itself, was amazing. The thing that really struck me so much about the reading is that I had never really thought about oppression. I knew what oppression was, being a Black man and growing up with pretty smart people in my family that lived down South – my mom's family is from Memphis, which of course, is where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, but I never really thought about how education could be used liberation.

I asked Malcolm why he had not thought about addressing oppression through education before he was introduced to Freire. He discussed his undergraduate teacher education program:

As I was learning to be a teacher, we never said squat about oppression or the notion that education can be and should be used as a tool for liberation. So, a couple years after my initial undergraduate training – having Paulo's ideas introduced to me put me on an entirely new course. It blew my world apart. [Laughing]. 'Cause now suddenly I had a new purpose, because before I read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), my mission was to help my students be more exposed to the history and literature of African Americans.

Malcolm described how Freire's work transformed his pedagogy and gave him a new educational mission:

Reading Paulo gave me a new mission – it wasn't just about adding more Black faces to the literature. It was about helping students understand what education can be for

and what we can do with education – that education is fundamentally about social justice. Helping people overcome oppressive practices is how I was introduced to it, and that’s pretty much what I got out of it.

Before learning about Freire, I did not know about the concept of hegemony, and I rarely used the word “oppression.” Both concepts are now firmly embedded in my current curriculum.

Freire’s work gave me a new mission as well, and it marked the beginning of identifying as a social justice educator.

Authentic Liberation

Malcolm supports Freire’s concept of authentic liberation, whereby only the oppressed can liberate themselves. He talked of how Malcolm X initially rejected any help from White people, but then later changed his rhetoric, claiming, “Whites can help, but Blacks must lead” the liberation. Malcolm described how Freire’s work made him think deeply about oppression and liberation in ways he had never thought of before:

The notion is that you can’t liberate the oppressed; the oppressed have to liberate themselves, but you as a teacher can be an agent of liberation. You as a teacher can create circumstances and experiences that can help the oppressed question and challenge their own experiences. It was really, really deep for me. Again, it put me on that path of trying to challenge what our assumptions are about living in a culture and society. ’Cause most people, I think, have this idea that we’re free, you know, America’s the land of freedom, but it’s a lot harder to get them to see how we continue to have oppressive practices and structures within our everyday lives.

Authentic liberation seems difficult for many North American higher education students to understand because of the role our government has played when addressing injustices and suffering both at home and around the world. It is common practice to impose policy and strategies on the oppressed, rather than encouraging the oppressed to lead in the liberation

process. The marginalized are often viewed as helpless people in need of being rescued. NCLB is a classic example of the powerful imposing their own remedies to inequality of education on communities, rather than encouraging and supporting ideas developed by those impacted by injustice and inequality. An international example is the Iraq War invasion in 2003. The United States government claimed that after weapons of mass destruction were not found, the objective was to liberate the Iraqi people. This liberation was inauthentic because an outside oppressive force was liberating the people; the people were not liberating themselves. I use both of these examples when I teach about Freire's concept of authentic liberation. As Malcolm claimed, this concept is deep and can create conflicts in students' perceptions of their own government.

Lived Experiences

Regarding Freire's advocacy of respecting the lived experiences of students and embracing cultural pluralism, Malcolm claimed, "Freire allowed me to see the legitimacy of all cultures and experiences and that schools can be constructed to honor the variations within and among people and communities." In another conversation, he said, "Freire's ideas are so important because he provides a theoretical foundation for not denying people's reality or their interpretation of their reality by respecting their lived experiences." However, Malcolm acknowledged that he sometimes struggles with this, "You know, I do fail sometimes at privileging the fact that everyone has their own knowledge, experiences, expertise, and ways of seeing the world, and they're all valid."

Freire's work helped me understand the importance of respecting students' lived experiences if education is to be liberatory. Like Malcolm, I do not always privilege all knowledge, especially if it seems racist, classist, sexist, or otherwise intolerant to others. For example, during the data collection phase of this study, a student said, "I think all poor people are lazy." I shut the student down with my own personal experiences of being poor and working hard. However, I have noticed that conducting this study has helped me become more aware of instances when I do not seem to privilege all opinions. For example, last semester, I was presenting bell hooks' argument that Whiteness is valued in the United States, resulting in discrimination against non-Whites. During the class discussion, a Black male student said, "Well, I just think lighter colored skin girls are more beautiful." Before this study, I may have reprimanded the student for insulting a quarter of the class. Instead, I decided to respect his opinion and move on to the next student comment and said (paraphrasing), "I'm not sure how to respond to that comment, but I respect your opinion." I did, however, ask the students if they thought our perceptions of beauty were because society and the media tell us a White, thin, tall, small-nosed woman with high cheek bones defines beauty, not because those characteristics actually embody some universal definition of beauty. As Malcolm indicated, his struggles in his own pedagogy, I also do not always validate student's opinions that have resulted from their lived experiences.

Racism

Freire claimed that people dehumanize others, which enables them to oppress without guilt. I asked Malcolm what dehumanization meant to him, and he responded,

“Dehumanization is an attempt to render another as irrelevant.” Malcolm and I had many conversations about racism. He indicated, “The first time I socially recognized race was when I was six or seven years old. I watched *Roots* and realized that White people oppress Black people.” He continued, “Systematically, over time, I realized my race was an issue.” In another conversation, Malcolm told me about his experiences in college dating White women:

When I got to college, I started dating a White girl. One day, she said to me, “I told my parents, and they are not for it.” The next time I saw her parents, they said something like, “We don’t think you should be with our daughter.” I said, “Why not?” And they said, “We don’t believe in race mixing.” I dated another White girl in college and when her mom found out, she called me. She said, “What you should do is break up with my daughter and go and find yourself a nice Black girl and do some good things for your people.”

The stories Malcolm told me about dating outside of his race saddened me. I remember dating a Black man once, and he told me he could never bring me home to meet his family because they would disapprove of him dating a White girl. So, I partially understand Malcolm’s predicament. However, because I am a member of the dominant race in this country, the comment the man I was dating made was more annoying than hurtful. I now understand that I will never truly know how Malcolm felt as a Black man being told that he is not good enough for the parents of a White daughter. My situation seemed more a matter of not being accepted because I was a member of the oppressor group; Malcolm’s situation seemed more a matter of being perceived as inferior because he is Black.

Malcolm told me that Freire’s idea of authentic dialogue is a good way to discuss issues regarding race, claiming “Having freedom to openly air your experiences helps. So often your experiences with racism are denied.” He said that many people do not recognize

they treat people of another race differently and dialogue creates critical consciousness necessary when addressing racism:

Through dialogue, people can recognize this, then have a conversation. When White folk recognize that there is a part of reality that they do not understand, that is when the walls of White privilege can be broken down. When they hear stories of being looked at cross-eyed, denied getting apartment that was still available when they called, or being called “nigger,” they sometimes begin to see they too treat people differently.

Our conversations about race and racism truly helped me understand how my Whiteness prevents me from truly understanding the plights of being Black or Brown in this country. This realization has helped me articulate my limits to my students, and I believe has strengthened my pedagogy as a social justice educator.

I have read that Black professors face many challenges in higher education (hooks, 1994). When I asked Malcolm what it was like to be Black in the academy, he said:

I have been looked at sideways and questioned whether I am really a professor. When I am standing next to a White professor who is the same age, teaching the same thing, she is never questioned, but I get what we Black folk call “the funny vibe.”

Malcolm described “the funny vibe” as unspoken energy given off by students and faculty that he perceives as doubts people have about his qualifications and worthiness of his position as a professor. I asked him how he handles racism both in the academy and in society. He replied, “My life strategy is that I try not to recognize it as much as possible because I get so hurt and angry. I get debilitated.”

Banking vs. Problem-Posing Education

When I observed Malcolm teach, it was clear that he embraced dialogue as a pedagogical tool. In an interview, I asked him how he felt about banking and problem-posing education. Malcolm responded:

When I first read about the banking method, it was that revelatory moment that most people get when they read Chapter 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). The lights go on, it's like yeah, you know, my teachers never really asked me anything. They just told me what to think, told me what I should know.

Students included in this study indicated that they too felt as though many teachers did not seem to care how they felt about the content being taught, nor were teachers concerned about how the content related to their students' lives. Malcolm connected banking to his own experiences as a student and a teacher:

We end up teaching the way we do based on what we have been exposed to as students. Transferring those practices into our own thing without really ever thinking what goes into the development of those practices or what the ultimate repercussions of those practices are. So, thinking about pouring that information into students head and expecting them to regurgitate it back through basically multiple-choice and short-answer tests, you know, is kind of lame at the end of the day.

Malcolm's point has helped me understand why seemingly well-intended teachers use banking education in their pedagogy. When I reflect on my early years teaching, I did a fair amount of lecturing because that was the method I was taught as a student, as well as a teacher candidate. When I learned about Freire's ideas of problem-posing education, I started referring to banking teachers as bad teachers, without really understanding that many were simply teaching how they were taught. This realization has helped me become more compassionate and less critical of teachers who use banking education in their classrooms.

I asked Malcolm to expand on his interpretation of problem-posing education. He described how the Socratic method has impacted his pedagogy and how he thinks he sometimes runs an authoritative classroom:

The notion of problem posing, I think, is also very important for me as well. I have always taken more of a Socratic method in my teaching – I like to ask students questions. Of course, like a lot of teachers, I do like to hear my own voice, so I don't mind slipping into that direct instruction and lecturing kind of thing. You know, getting up on my soap box about social and cultural issues. At the same time, I think it's important to lay a scenario out on the table and challenge people – push them forward. Then again, I feel this is where I fail in a lot of ways. I do continue to this day to take that position of authority within the classroom.

Taking a position of authority is consistent with Freire's description of effective facilitators of dialogue. He distinguished between authoritative and authoritarian teachers and argued that problem-posing education requires the educator to be vigilant in making connections and keeping the dialogue moving in a positive direction. While he advocated a nonhierarchical classroom that values all students and teachers as fellow humans, he did not believe this meant that students are on the same footing as the teacher when it comes to curricular choices and direction of dialogue. I believe Malcolm is being too critical of his pedagogy when he implied he takes a position of authority. On the other hand, both Malcolm and I admit to slipping into authoritarian pedagogy when handling comments of dissent. In an authoritarian classroom, the teacher is always right and student input lacks value. In contrast, in an authoritative classroom, the teacher takes control of the direction of the dialogue, while still viewing students as valuable and fully human.

Facilitating dialogue can be exhausting and time consuming. Malcolm described his difficulties implementing problem-posing education because of time constraints, but he acknowledged this as a possible weakness in his pedagogy:

I do have that tendency of glossing over the problem-posing method and slipping back and forth between problem-posing and banking. A lot of times, you know you only have 15 weeks and there's a lot that our courses are trying to teach in that small amount of space. Sometimes I have to sidestep being more problem-posing and engaging in more of an authentic dialogue just as a matter of saving time. That might be a matter of my own weakness in the classroom, but it is what it is.

When implementing Freire's problem-posing education, determining how much time it will take to cover a topic can be challenging. As Malcolm indicated, moving from problem-posing to banking and back to problem-posing may be necessary because of time constraints.

Sometimes I will look at the clock and realize I have only covered two of the eight points I wanted to cover for that day, and I only have ten minutes left in the class period. I then might slip into banking and touch on the remaining topics. This is very frustrating. At times, I feel as though I seem unprepared or ill-equipped at managing time.

Freire's Terminology

In Chapter IV, I described the curriculum used in the courses included in this study. I talk about Paulo Freire on the first day of class and continue using his language and ideas throughout the semester. Malcolm introduces Freire's concepts but does not continue with the terms. In regards to conscientization, Malcolm claimed not to use the term because students seem confused with it. "I talk about Freire's ideas without using the terminology." He said he uses Freire's concepts of conscientization, praxis, banking, and problem-posing in his

pedagogy, but resists using Freire's terminology in class. He takes some responsibility for avoiding the use of Freire's language in his classroom. Malcolm also said he doesn't always attribute ideas to Freire, even when he knows that his pedagogy is Freireian. This difference in our pedagogy will be discussed further in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Student Resistance

When asked about student resistance, Malcolm claimed, "Students do not take well to the word 'oppression,' especially White students. Many, if not most, of them will stay silent, nod their heads, and regurgitate for the exam." He also said that he frequently gets comments on student evaluations claiming he discusses race too much. As an African American man, who injects his personal experiences into his pedagogy, I argue race is central to his lived experiences. My thought whenever he references this type of comment on student evaluations is, "Of course he talks about race issues; he's Black!" During a conversation, I asked Malcolm to tell me a story about an experience with student resistance. The following is the dialogue between us:

Malcolm: A few years ago, I was teaching an education course. I had embedded Freire's work into the class, especially his concept of oppression. The class was engaged in a good discussion and making strong connections. We were talking about a "culture of power" as a reflection of hegemony, and the discussion led to students talking about how if you weren't part of the "culture of power," you were marginalized.

I noticed that a White female student sitting in the middle of the classroom was not participating. So, I said, "What's on your mind?" She responded, "You don't want to know" (Malcolm laughed). I said, "Now that you say that, of course I want to know." She piped up and said, "All this race stuff wouldn't be a problem if it wasn't for people like you and the NAACP."

Her comment threw me into a tail spin. I thought, “She did not just tramp down like that!” I was taken aback; I didn’t know how to respond.

Molly: What did you do?

Malcolm: I collected myself and turned it back on to the class. I said, “That’s a valid perspective. Let’s talk about it. What do you all think?” The class ate her up. They started looking back at Freire’s theory of oppression and how he believed if people are oppressed, they should be talking about the nature of their oppression. One student said, “A response like that is an attempt to silence voices.”

Molly: I would have been freaking out.

Malcolm: I did not take it personally, but used the experience to help other students engage in the ideas. If you let it get personal, then you are no longer teaching or engaging in authentic dialogue, you are slipping into diatribes.

Molly: That’s what I do. So, what happened?

Malcolm: After class, I walked with her and she apologized. She said, “I know these things are important to you.” I responded, “Well, you can’t blame things on the individual. The fact that I am Black, people have certain ideas about me that have nothing to do with whether or not I am a good person. You bring your experiences with you wherever you go and use those experiences” She was much more understanding of the concepts by the end of the semester. If I had gone off on her, I would have ultimately silenced her. She would have felt marginalized.

Molly: I do that sometimes.

Malcolm: It’s one thing to get it from a classmate; it’s another to get it from a professor. Freire believed we are all imperfect and must actively battle our own misconceptions. It’s about a process of promoting an ideal. When you start challenging people, they get territorial on who they are and their ideas.

When I designed this study, one of my objectives was to gain a better understanding of student resistance so I could develop a more inclusive pedagogy. When I think about how I would have handled the student resister in Malcolm’s class, I probably would not have been as gracious as he was. The student attacked Malcolm personally and professionally. I envy his

ability to remain calm during such attacks. In the next chapter, I present an analysis of student resistance, as well as strategies for handling such resistance.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION: A PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

“At the end of the day, effective teaching depends most heavily on one thing: deep and caring relationships.” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 191)

In this final chapter, I reflect on Freire’s ideas and theories presented in this dissertation. The similarities and differences between my dialogue partner’s and my interpretation and implementation of Freire’s ideas and theories are discussed. I compare Malcolm’s classroom environment to mine. I then provide an analysis of my experiences with student resistance. Implications for social justice educators including encouraging and embracing the implementation of Freire’s pedagogy of hope, using mass media and popular culture in education, adding humor and music to the Freireian classroom, and learning from student resistance are presented. Finally, I discuss implications for future researcher, and provide closing comments.

A Reflection on Freire’s Ideas and Theories

In higher education, teachers have a unique opportunity to provide classroom experiences for students that awaken them to their humanity. Darder (2002) claims, “A humanizing education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world” (p. 34). The objective should be to unite us in our humanity, not

divide us with our differences. Humanist educators help students construct a world view that is personally meaningful. Education is learner-centered, and the relevance of the material is always stressed. A nonhierarchical framework helps create participatory spaces for all students, and the educator is viewed as a facilitator of learning, rather than an authoritarian of the classroom. Education that consists merely of a one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student is not humanism. A humanist believes in education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994) and is genuinely devoted to liberation.

I spend much of the semester helping students become critically conscious (conscientization) that hegemony and oppression exist in the United States. Creating critical awareness is the first step; if students are not aware problems exist, they will not take action to find remedies to the injustices. Some students do not deny oppression exists in North America, they just accept it. If the oppressed believe a culture of domination (hooks, 1994) is a natural human phenomenon, whereby they have been convinced that it is natural for a powerful group to rule over a powerless group, they are more likely to accept the oppression. I have witnessed what I call learned helplessness among students, especially from those who are marginalized. It is as though some do not believe a just society is possible. This fatalist attitude is devastating non-White and poor communities throughout the United States, as many turn to illegal activity, including violence, which is often targeted at each other.

Empowering marginalized students to stand up and fight for their own liberation is central to my pedagogy, if students do not have hope that a more just world is possible, the cycles of violence and poverty continue. When I ask students what threatens the thriving of the human race, violence is always included that discussion. However, I find students often

blame violence on the perpetrators of violence rather than the deplorable conditions created by the oppressors. The resulting self-blame and self-hatred create obstacles for authentic liberation. When students realize that the conditions are a result of hegemonic policies of the powerful, they can resist the oppressor and move in a direction of self-liberation.

What I find interesting is the seemingly shortsightedness of the oppressor's hegemonic policies. I have often thought, "Do the powerful fail to understand that oppressing the masses harms them too?" Freire supports my concern claiming that oppression prevents both the oppressed and the oppressors from becoming fully human. Freire cautions that "the more the oppressors control the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate 'things'" (Freire, 1970, p. 59). If people being oppressed are not viewed as fully human, it is easier for the oppressor to accept the oppression because it frees the oppressor from guilt. Those in power dehumanize groups of people not belonging to the dominant class. So, are the masses really inanimate things? Do those in power really look at members of marginalized groups as less than human? This disconnect between the rulers and the masses in North America is mirrored worldwide. Most students indicated in their reflections and course summaries that the course helped them become critically aware that hegemony and oppression are found in the United States. However, some students accept that hegemony and oppression exist elsewhere, yet fail to believe they exist in the United States. I take my role of creating this critical awareness with higher education students very seriously.

Most students in this study wrote that almost all of their higher education courses are taught through banking education, where students are viewed as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge transferred from teacher to student. Some have mastered the system of rote

memorization and lack of participation in the learning process. However, most students indicate that this type of learning is boring, torturous, and completely removed from their realities, and they agree that shortly after quizzes and exams, they forget what they learned. There is general consensus that there are few opportunities for students to dialogue about the content they are supposed to learn.

Striving for cultural pluralism can be a daunting task. I often struggle with students who are so set in their beliefs; they resist even the notion of embracing people or ideas that are different. Of course, not all groups preach intolerance, and many are devoted to loving and accepting all people. The problem for progressive educators is that every student is at a different place in accepting cultural pluralism as a shared goal in our society, and many outright refuse to validate positions that are different from their own. Many students who fall into this category are also the students who are “tired of talking about racism.” However, Freire argued that cultural pluralism must be included in discussions of discrimination. Many educators avoid talking about these sensitive issues of difference because it makes them uncomfortable. It is easier in the short run to ignore our differences, but as I say, “You can only run so long; our country is not getting any less multicultural.”

Love in education is fundamental if student transformation is the objective, and most students indicated that they enjoyed learning about Freire’s emphasis on love playing an integral role in education. However, I did not find consensus among students on the role love plays in education, which I understand. For some, it is the first time they have considered the notion that love in education has the potential to make their learning experiences powerful, profound, and transformational. I was thrilled when I learned Freire’s work supported my love

of humanity and, more specifically, helped me articulate why love inspires me to fight for social justice. Freire embodied love in his life and work, and learning about him helped me recognize that my desire to care deeply for my students was genuinely motivated by my love of humanity.

An Analysis of Student Resistance

It seems that socially and politically conservative students who have a sense of humor and are well traveled find me refreshing; students who are serious, fearful, and suspect of views other than their own sometimes respond to my classroom curricular choices and pedagogy with anger. I connect with most of my students because I make an honest effort to care and love all of them regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, political affiliation, or any other difference. As conservative students Scott (C), Colin (C), Eric (B) and Kathryn (C) indicated in their course summaries, I consciously reach out to students that I think might have difficulty digesting my social justice message and attempt to welcome their views into classroom dialogue.

My passionate personality and clear social justice mission play significant roles in student resistance. In other words, a different Freireian educator with different methodology and personality might not upset some students the way I have. I have often wondered if I should change or tone it down so as to not alienate some of my students, but when I suggest this change, the majority of my students beg me not to do this. I find it very interesting that the students in this study who most strongly encouraged me not to change were Trevon (A), Xavier (A), and Demetrius (A), who are all Black males. Tiara (B) and Ebony (A) also spoke

fondly of my love for students. “Everyone is not going to like you, Molly,” and “Please don’t change a thing” are student comments I have heard many times. Regardless, student resistance always seems to bother me.

I don’t know any social justice educators who are not passionate about justice. Passion is what keeps us going. I remember clearly when my student resister, Nick (C) said, “I am always suspect of people with passion.” I was so shocked. For so many years, including the academic year included in this study, students have indicated how much they love my passion. Needless to say, I don’t think Nick (C) enjoyed my class. I argue that a social justice educator will have difficulty fighting for justice if not motivated by passion and love of humanity. Freire was passionate. He cared deeply for those who are marginalized. He devoted his life to addressing issues of injustice. Without passion and hope, our struggles for a more just society will be “weak and wobbly” (Freire, 1970). The vast majority of my students love my passion, and I sincerely hope it never dies.

When I feel resistance from students, I sometimes get snappy and sarcastic. I might walk around the classroom using large gestures and a louder voice, as though I am on some social justice stage. I do not like this about myself. Sometimes I take the resistance personally, which Malcolm strongly discouraged. I feel as though I have failed the students somehow. I blame myself and think, why can’t I convince my students to care about others who suffer? What am I doing wrong? I believe this response stems from a deep-seated love of humanity and a desire for justice, as well as a lack of understanding of some of the potential reasons for student resistance.

I argue firmly that I believe hegemonic policies have created oppressive situations in the United States. For one, some students do not want to believe that people in power, especially if the student supports those in power, have developed and implemented policies that hold average American citizens back. I find those who believe strongly in meritocracy are the most resistant. “Just work hard, and you will get out of poverty,” and “The American dream is achievable for anyone who wants it” are comments that have been said in my classes. I also had a student who recently said, “There are plenty of jobs. Poor people are just lazy and want to live off the government.” I usually don’t handle these types of comments very well, but I am working on it by trying to pause and reflect before I respond, rather than reacting immediately. Unfortunately, I have responded with comments like, “That is not true. Meritocracy is a myth!” or “Poor people are not lazy! I was poor, I work very hard.” My defensive responses can shut down student resisters, as I unfortunately regress to hierarchical power in my classroom. “I’m the teacher, and I am right. You are wrong.” This is a weakness in my pedagogy, and I think Freire would be disappointed in me.

Understanding that education itself is a political act and that neutrality is impossible is incredibly difficult for some students to handle. I try and explain that hiding behind false neutrality is very dangerous. I use The Fox News Channel’s slogan “Fair and Balanced” as an example of false neutrality. I am highly critical of Fox News throughout the semester. However, I explain, “It is not that I believe Fox News does not have the right to exist. I believe in freedom of speech. It is that Fox News hides behind false neutrality that is the problem.” Some socially and politically conservative students do not like that I criticize Fox News, and they have indicated this in their course summaries and course evaluations. For

example, Nick (C) claimed, “The class was spent railing against Fox News for being too conservative,” which, of course, was not the point I was trying to make. Nevertheless, that is how Nick (C) perceived it.

I argue that I do not hide behind neutrality at all. I am biased and I have an agenda: to help this world become more compassionate and more loving, with less suffering and less injustice, a world where meritocracy becomes a reality. I believe all Americans should be clothed, fed, and have shelter. All Americans should have access to quality healthcare, quality education, and a healthy environment. Until this happens, meritocracy, equality, and the American dream for all will continue to be myths. I articulate these positions in class, and I am highly critical of the forces I believe prevent this type of society. Needless to say, I have been accused of being “very, very, very, very liberal!” Now, I am from California, and from my experiences living in a liberal state and being raised by a liberal mother, I argue that this is an inaccurate characterization of me. I describe myself as a moderate liberal, but I understand why I might be perceived in the Midwest as very liberal.

The climate before the election of Barack Obama in 2008 was actually much friendlier to my type of thinking than it is now. I noticed a stark contrast from student resisters before and after the election. Perhaps it is because before the election, student resisters felt they were in power, so arguments I made did not appear to have grounds for implementation. After the election, I started to get the feeling that student resisters actually saw me as a threat to their way of life. This study was conducted during the Barack Obama administration. I made it clear to students that I believe that many of the policies of the George W. Bush administration were in direct opposition to my social justice mission, and I present data supporting this

notion: higher poverty rates, massive increases in disparities in wealth distribution, higher unemployment rates, more restrictive reproductive rights, an unjust war in Iraq, and a massive assault on the environmental movement with deregulation and the reversal of many of President Clinton's environmental regulation policies. During the George W. Bush years, I felt as though the social justice movement was not only deemed unimportant, policies were developed and implemented that seemed in direct opposition to moving the United States in a more just direction. So I started fighting harder to give voice to those who are marginalized. Perhaps my intensified passion to combat what I perceived as hegemonic policies of the Bush administration led to intensified student resistance.

What is disheartening about student resisters is that I make it very clear on the first day of class that I am a social justice educator; students know where I stand on injustice and intolerance. I am extremely transparent when I teach. I do not indicate that I strive to create neutral space where the dominant culture can reinforce dominance. In fact, I state that I intentionally include perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups. The authors included in my curriculum are African American and Latino, and I openly argue that voices of non-Whites and women are often absent in higher education, and that I want to change that by exposing them to non-dominant perspectives. I create a reading packet and syllabus that addresses issues of injustice the entire semester including readings, song lyrics, worksheets, assignment guidelines, team meetings, and a values clarification worksheet that are presented in the packet.

I explain to students that I am not neutral and that I am a humanist. I will fight for justice for the rest of my life. I am on a quest for mutual humanization for all. I will seek to

give voice to those who are marginalized. I have faith in the human race. I believe all humans have potential to have a positive impact on society. On the first day of class, I explain my philosophy and social justice mission and tell students I want to make sure the class is a good fit for them. I also state that the department offers 25 sections of the course, and not all of them are taught from a social justice perspective. If they are not interested in the type of class I run, I can find another section for them. Interestingly, I am aware of only two students out of over 4,000 who actually transferred to a different section after the first day. In other words, I make every effort to communicate my philosophy and pedagogy throughout the semester. Students should not be surprised with my untraditional pedagogy.

Some resisters might argue that I am an idealist or perhaps naïve. I am often surprised how little faith in humans some people have. Unfortunately, some may dismiss my mission because of this idealism, and I just tell them it is part of my spiritual belief and it motivates me to come and teach every day. Freire was criticized for being an idealist. Godonoo (1998) writes that Freire was accused of being “a dreamer who seeks to change social reality by a simple change of human consciousness” (p. 3). Though Freire was idealist, his theories went far beyond simply changing human consciousness. Critical awareness is an important first step; however, Freire argued conscientization must be accompanied with praxis. I believe my continuous modification, adaptation, and reinvention of my pedagogy and curricular choices teaching Education as an Agent for Change demonstrates my attempt to implement Freire’s call for reflection and action in my own pedagogy.

An Ongoing Dialogue

When I designed this study, I wanted to engage in a dialogue with another self-identified Freireian educator who was committed to carrying on Freire's legacy. Darder (2002) writes:

In the spirit of Freire's dream, teachers need to create alliances across cultural communities and class positions that are firmly grounded in a process that can help us overcome our lack of democratic experience through participation, while superseding the irrational and dehumanizing hegemonic forces that prevail. (27)

I believe that I found the perfect dialogue partner to help me understand Freire's pedagogy, as well as my strengths and weaknesses as an aspiring Freireian educator and scholar. Malcolm has not only provided a perspective from another academic, he has become a dear friend, colleague, and ally in our social justice mission. This study has marked the beginning of what I hope is a lifelong professional relationship with Malcolm. In this section, I describe our similarities and differences in our interpretation and implementation of Freire's ideas and theories.

It was quite clear early in my study of Malcolm that our pedagogy and philosophy of education were incredibly similar. I found myself in agreement with him most of the time. Even our struggles paralleled. When asked about Freire's concept of praxis, Malcolm claimed he incorporates reflection, but not enough action. I struggle with finding creative ways to encourage social action. I recently added a social action website assignment in which teams research websites dedicated to social action and then present their websites to the rest of the class. However, I do not require students to join the organizations. As a result, this assignment is actually an exercise in critical consciousness of what students could do to get involved,

rather than actually taking action. When I worked at a small community college, I was able to incorporate service learning into my curriculum, where part of the course requirement was to volunteer at a community organization. I had developed partnerships with nonprofit organizations throughout the community, and placed 20 to 25 students in the organizations twice a year. Managing placements and monitoring the progress of one class was challenging. Teaching four classes a semester with over 120 students makes coordinating service learning or any other forms of social action logistically difficult to implement. As Malcolm indicated, the reflection aspect of praxis seems relatively easy to implement; incorporating the action component into my curriculum has created many challenges for me. I continually seek curricular ideas to encourage my students to engage in social action.

During one interview, Malcolm said, “Sometimes I am overly opinionated. I don’t privilege all positions.” I could not agree more. I think this has to do with our passion for social justice. As mentioned previously, social justice educators are incredibly passionate. We tend to get frustrated when students resist our attempts to convince them that injustice is a serious problem or even a problem at all, for that matter. He also stated that “I can tend to get argumentative, as though I have to prove that Freire is right! I am sure Freire would not be happy with me about that.” I can completely empathize with this feeling as well. When students challenge my assertions, I often get defensive. When I teach on the defense, or as I like to call it “back on my heels,” I am much less Freireian and much more authoritarian.

Malcolm tells many stories in class: “Telling stories is a big part of my pedagogy.” Both times I observed him teach, he told stories. I tell stories, too. Freire strongly supports incorporating lived experiences in the classroom, which is an integral aspect of problem-

posing education. When we talked about the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool, Malcolm claimed, “Sharing pages of your life is important.” I believe telling stories is one of the most effective methods when striving for relevance of the material being covered.

We both seem confident, yet humble. I think Freire would appreciate our humility. Malcolm claimed, “I am nowhere near as Freireian as I would like to be...but now I have that root for my teaching. I am connected to a larger mission and that guides what I say, the readings I assign, and the tasks I want them to complete.” Even though I call myself a Freireian educator, I, too, believe I am not as Freireian as I would like to be, which is why I started calling myself an aspiring Freireian educator. Both of us desire to understand and incorporate Freire’s ideas more effectively, which is indicative of our ongoing sense of humility. I believe Freire would support that shared quality.

A major difference between Malcolm’s pedagogy and mine is our use of Freire’s language. I begin the semester talking about Freire and reference him throughout the entire semester. As described in Chapter IV, I spend an entire week creating a loving Freireian learning environment, specifically using his language. I reference Freire when discussing bell hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). I mention Freire’s name virtually every day I teach. I find myself starting sentences with “Paulo Freire would argue...” I have an entire unit specifically devoted to Paulo Freire’s pedagogical language of hope. When teaching about different educational philosophies, I tell my students my mission is to carry on Freire’s legacy so that he can be included in perennialist philosophy as ideas that are timeless and everlasting like Plato and Socrates.

The interesting element to this whole study is that I actually think Malcolm's implementation of Freire's ideas may be more Freireian than mine. While our methods and philosophy are very similar, he seems more open to difference and otherness. His language is more accepting. His classroom is more relaxed. He invites critical analysis of the content presented more than I do. Malcolm seems to handle resistance more effectively and does not seem to get as defensive as I do. I appreciate this realization. He has inspired me want to be more Freireian. Malcolm has helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses as an educator, which was my hope at the start of this dissertation. I want to improve my pedagogy and inspire others to want to improve theirs as well.

Implications for Social Justice Educators

Embracing Freire's Pedagogy of Hope

Traditional higher education courses provide few opportunities for reflection. Students indicate that most of their courses involve sitting and listening to the professor and then taking exams on the information presented. Students are rarely asked to reflect on the content or make connections to their own lives. They are treated as empty vessels to be filled with content which professors fail to make relevant. As a result, many higher education courses seem meaningless and torturous. Opportunities to reflect on the relevance of the content being taught are rare. Pedagogy that requires rote memorization without reflection results in meaningless education. Students tell me they forget what they learned shortly after they take

the test. Some also feel that many of the higher education courses they take are a waste of their money.

Perhaps dialogue is the most glaring omission in higher education pedagogy. Students indicate that they rarely have opportunities to participate in dialogue in most of their classes. I urge educators to develop a dialogical pedagogy that empowers their students. Facilitating dialogue is not easy, but the reward of student transformation can make the effort worthwhile. Some educators avoid using dialogue as a pedagogical tool for fear of losing control of their classrooms, which is a valid concern. Facilitating authentic dialogue can be exhausting and unpredictable. Teachers cannot let their classes fall into a *laissez-faire* state; they must be in command and be prepared for student comments that have the potential to derail the intended direction of the lesson.

When facilitating dialogue, the social justice educator must find a balance between creating a safe space for students to express themselves, having clear objectives of conscientization and praxis, recognizing when students are on the learning edge (but haven't fallen off yet), and respecting each student's lived experiences as unique and valuable. The effective facilitator of dialogue is spontaneous, has the ability to think and change directions quickly, and is a good listener. Integral to facilitating authentic dialogue are humility, faith, hope, and love, which are only effective elements of dialogue if mutual trust exists; this trust can be established by respecting students' lived experiences.

Students can be marginalized in traditional higher education classes because many teachers expect them to leave their personal lives out of the learning process. Social justice educators respect all knowledge students bring to the classroom and design classroom

discussions, assignments, and activities to move them closer to understanding their students' lived experiences. Many students indicate that they do not feel respected in the academic setting, especially those from marginalized groups. Some attempt to adapt to the dominant heterosexual White culture in both dress and speech. Others rebel, but not too many.

I find the underlying attitude in higher education is that the students are incapable of adding to the classroom experience simply because they are too young and inexperienced. I firmly disagree with this premise. I pose that all students bring unique lived experiences to the classroom that provide opportunities for teachers to make content relevant. Educators can still teach without knowing the lived experiences of their students; however, they may not facilitate student transformation. Personally, I want to be the teacher that students remember as helping them grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually as a result of their experiences in our class. This transformation will not take place if I do not get to know my students' lived experiences.

Students often indicate in their summaries of their course experiences that everything we talked about in class related to their lives. This is not an accident. I learn how to make the content relevant by listening to their stories, reading their personal reflections, and paying attention to group dynamics and team chemistry. By establishing a loving learning environment early in the semester, I am able to create an atmosphere where most students feel comfortable sharing their stories. I also establish early on that I am open to learning from them, just as I would hope that they are open to learning from me.

If more teachers understood the importance of students' lived experiences as integral to the pedagogical process, more students would care about learning. This includes teaching

the whole student: mind, body, and spirit. Understanding each other's worlds is a necessary aspect of dialogue and authentic liberation, where all students feel free to express who they are. I dream of the day when all students, regardless of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation feel proud to be who they are, rather than trying to adapt to the dominate culture.

Freire believed that teachers need to have faith in humankind and remain humble. I argue humility is a primary reason I connect well with students. I tell students that I do not know everything about life, and that I plan on learning until I take my last breath. Authentic liberatory pedagogy requires educators to remain humble and have faith in humankind, as well as develop a mission of helping students realize their potential to become fully human. Without faith in humankind, there can be no hope for mutual humanization.

Social justice educators should love their content, love the art of teaching, and yes, love their students, as fellow human beings on a quest to become fully human. Nicole eloquently affirms my argument:

Nicole (B): Loving your students, I have always believed, was the mark of a good educator. If a teacher does not care about his or her students, it is impossible to really reach them. Students can tell when a teacher genuinely cares, and when they are just teaching to earn a paycheck. If students know they are truly loved and cared about by the one educating them, they are certain to be more responsive and willing to learn from their teacher.

Learning about students' lived experiences shows students that the teacher genuinely cares about and loves students. Being flexible with due dates and excusing absences for serious family emergencies shows students that the teacher genuinely cares about the well-being of their students and loves them. Listening when students are struggling without belittling or chastising students, believing students when they say they are sick, recognizing when students

seem down or even especially excited, and giving students hugs when they need them all show students that the teacher cares about and loves them. All of these acts of compassion are integral in my pedagogy and show my students that I love them as humans, and students indicated they appreciate my unique ability to love. Most of us are on the same quest: to be fully human. I urge educators to embrace the emotion of love in education.

Using Mass Media and Popular Culture

Mass media and popular culture are powerful agents for change. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) write, “Popular culture, with its TV, movies, video games, computers, music, dance, and other productions plays an increasingly important role in critical research on power and domination” (p. 284). Using mass media and popular culture as a pedagogical tool requires diligence on the part of the teacher as well as the students, because some messages from mass media are used to manipulate people, promote hegemonic policies, and instill hatred and intolerance. Macedo (2006) claims, “Since our society functions more and more on a pedagogy of lies, it depends on ideological institutions, such as schools and the media, to reproduce cultural values that work to distort and falsify realities so as to benefit the interest of the powerful elite” (p.34). The internet has provided enormous access for groups promoting hatred and intolerance. Sometimes the messages are hidden, sometimes they are obvious. Nonetheless, we must actively decipher enormous amounts of information.

Critical consciousness of mass media and popular culture involves understanding that fighting cultural differences in the name of sameness is futile. Every student understands the world through a lens shaped by his or her unique lived experiences; when dissecting messages

from mass media, these differences in perspective need to be acknowledged. Morrell (2008) embraces using mass media and popular culture as pedagogical tools claiming, “Students can use basic analytical techniques to make sense of how media texts portray populations of color” (p. 212) as well as other groups who are marginalized, such as women, the poor, and the disabled.

The social justice classroom is an excellent environment to help students learn to critically analyze the many messages received through mass media and popular culture. Students are often unaware of the debilitating consequences of degrading images of women in the media. Creating an environment that encourages open dialogue and critical awareness about the impact of sexism is vital in my social justice classroom. Students are encouraged to respect the lived experiences of others. Accepting our differences in race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political affiliation while striving for oneness in our humanity are central themes in class. It is common for me to say, “It’s not better, just different.”

Using mass media and popular culture in my pedagogy helps me stay connected to my students’ lived experiences. The education from mass media and popular culture that I receive from students is priceless. Consistent with Freireian theory, I believe learning should not be a one-way transfer of information. I learn so much from my students, and I tell them and thank them on a regular basis. “Teach me,” “I want to learn from you,” and “Help me out,” are expressions I frequently use. Students often seem amazed that their teacher actually wants to learn from them.

Adding Humor and Music to the Freireian Classroom

One element of my pedagogy that is not mentioned in Freire's social justice work is the use of humor – although I have read that he was a funny man. In a conversation with Freire, published as *What is the "Dialogical Method" of Teaching?* Ira Shor argues that “humor is one more creative moment, as a mutual comedy between students and teachers” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 30). I have found humor extremely effective when addressing social justice issues. Waldoks (1994) writes, “A sense of humor can help you overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable” (p. 5).

Racism, sexism, and classism are painful issues that can create tension in a classroom. However, “Humor is a great remedy for tension. Just a touch can often relax and engage an audience so that people will pay attention and be motivated to learn” (Korobkin, 1988, p. 155). Laughter has the power to break down barriers and provide opportunities for dialogue. Humor, when used productively, helps me establish an atmosphere that encourages students to express their concerns.

Social justice issues are difficult subjects, often involving oppression. “Humor is a way of defending against any oppressor – whether it be another person, a serious illness or even death” (Klein, 1998, p. 18). I find that when I use humor, which is often spontaneous in nature, students' inhibitions lower and they often say things they might not say otherwise. The result is a richer, honest dialogue. Ditlow (1993) writes, “Instructors who use humor are

highly rated by students for their ability to create an atmosphere in which release of tension is allowed in the presence of even the most difficult subjects” (p. 68).

As I evolve as an experienced educator, I have gained the confidence in the classroom to inject humor throughout the semester. I also use humor in my syllabus (Appendix B).

Sarcasm, exaggeration, incongruity, and spontaneity are all methods of humor that I use. In addition, learning to laugh at oneself is crucial when using humor in the classroom. Hudson (2001) writes, “If people see me laughing at myself – if they see that I’m even comfortable with people occasionally getting a laugh at my expense – I think that makes me more approachable and also lets others know that having a good time is okay” (p. 52). Laughing at oneself demonstrates one’s humanness; it shows others one’s imperfections, which ultimately breaks down communication barriers. Goodman (1983) claims, “As a fringe benefit, the students realized, ‘Hey, teacher is a human being; teacher has a sense of humor!’ This is a wonderful example of how we can use humor as a simple, yet powerful way to share our humanity” (p. 7).

Students seem to respond well to my use of humor as a pedagogical tool. Justin and Eric wrote about humor in the classroom:

Justin (B): I love the first quote of the reading discussing humor, “A sense of humor can help you overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable.” That quote is the story of my life. If more teachers embraced this idea in the classroom, the world, yes, the world would be a better place.

Eric (B): Adding humor is an effective way to break down barriers and address serious and touchy subjects. It often helps students feel comfortable to participate in class or to talk about these touchy subjects. I fully agree with this, and it has most definitely created a more relaxed, comfortable classroom where I feel like I can say almost anything.

Laughing at myself has also led to personal growth. Ditlow (1993) writes, “The greatest form of self-esteem is attained when we learn to laugh at ourselves” (p. 66). I am constantly laughing at myself while teaching. One semester, I taught with a broken ankle. When I teach, I move throughout the classroom. I started moving toward the back of the classroom and caught my ankle brace on the leg of a table; I fell flat on the floor. The students gasped, but I started laughing hysterically. The students started laughing with me. When I laugh at myself, students see me as a human, and it makes them feel more human. After all, it is a quest for mutual humanization, right?

Music is integral to my pedagogy. I play music before, during, and after class. In *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban American*, Ginwright (2010) uses jazz music to frame his methodology. He writes, “Music both informs and inspires and brings together the confluence of art and science” (p. 20). Some students comment in their course summaries that they enjoy my use of music; it creates an inviting atmosphere as they enter the classroom. For example, Marquis (B) wrote: “Continue to use music in the course. By using music, it opens up everyone and their views on different genres.” I also use music in my lesson plans. As presented in Chapter IV, I play songs related to the content we are discussing and we analyze the lyrics. I urge other educators to incorporate humor and music into their pedagogy.

Handling Student Resistance

In Chapter IV, I presented data from student resisters in an attempt to help me understand why I connect with most students, yet anger some. Student resisters seem to be

White, socially and politically conservative, and usually male. In *Social Change Education: Context Matters*, Kathryn Choules (2007) presents her readers with an understanding of student resistance to social justice education, as well as strategies for handling this resistance. Considering my resisters belong to the dominant White, middle- and upper-socioeconomic class, I will focus this section on Choules's recommendations for implementing a pedagogy of social change when dominant students are part of the process.

An important point Choules makes is that different teaching strategies are needed depending on whether students in a particular class come from dominant, marginalized, or mixed position groups. Choules (2007) writes:

When working with oppressed, excluded, or marginalized groups, the social change vision is more likely to be shared by students and the facilitator because its realization is seen to benefit the students. When working with the dominant social groups, or those who benefit from existing inequitable systems, the social change vision may well not be shared. Realization of the vision may well threaten students' status, power, and wealth. (p. 161)

When analyzing student responses presented in this study, it became clear to me that the students who embraced my pedagogy the most and encouraged me not to change my pedagogy were often from non-dominant groups, specifically from my Black students like Trevon (A), Xavier (A), and Demetrius (A). Choules (2007) continues:

When there is no common purpose between educator and students, the issue of how the educator exercises her or his institutional authority becomes even more significant. If students are located within the dominant group, there arises potential conflict between pursuing particular social change objectives and the popular education aim of democratic processes and horizontal relations between educators and students. (p. 168)

Before this study, I believed that social justice education threatened the positionality of the dominant group. However, I always assumed we had a shared goal of equality and justice for

all. Ellsworth (1989) provides an insightful critique of critical pedagogy and claims that implementing democratic dialogue is problematic because it operates from the assumption that teachers and students are united against the powerful forces of oppression. While I adjust my language and pedagogy for the different racial, ethnic, and political dynamics of each class, it never dawned on me that all students may not support my fight against injustice, especially when it may threaten their position of power. This realization is transformational for me. The assumption of a harmony of interests is extremely problematic for social justice educators, including myself (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 315). I now understand this assumption may have created a barrier to my ability to connect with some of my socially and politically conservative White students because the political objective of social justice may not be a shared goal. Perhaps it stemmed from a naïve belief that all Americans believed in equality and justice. I now recognize that social justice education may threaten dominant students' perceived status, power, and wealth, which may supersede their desire for a more just world with less suffering and more hopefulness. Now, I'm totally depressed.

Instead, Ellsworth argues that teachers "can no longer regard the enforcement of rationalism as a self-evident political act against relations of domination" (p. 304). We are all unique individuals who bring our own assumptions and experiences to the classroom. Ellsworth (1989) wrote of students in her class: "Participants expressed much pain, confusion, and difficulty in speaking because of the ways in which discussions called up their multiple and contradictory social positionings" (p. 312). Students may relate to some issues yet find other issues completely foreign. For example, White, Black, and Latina female students might identify with struggles women face in our society, but cannot deeply understand each other's

racial positions within society. This leads to partial understanding of each other, not full understanding. Referencing Audre Lorde's (1984) *Sister Outsider*, Ellsworth (1989) claims:

Realizing that there are partial narratives that some social groups or cultures have and others can never know, but that are necessary to human survival, is a condition to embrace and use as an opportunity to build a kind of social and educational interdependency that recognizes differences as "different strengths" and as "forces for change." (p. 319)

Ellsworth's claim reminds me of a conversation I had with Malcolm when he stated, "When White folk recognize that there is a part of my reality that they do not understand, that is when the walls of White privilege can be broken down." Likewise, I cannot expect Malcolm to understand all aspects of my perception of reality as a White, heterosexual woman who has broken the cycle of poverty. Perhaps asking students to join some generic, collective, social justice mission is unrealistic.

Choules (2007) writes, "Dialogue favors individuals who are confident, articulate, and educated. Those who dominate societal relations, such as men, Whites, and the wealthy, are able to dominate dialogue in an educational space" (p. 172). I attempt to provide participatory spaces for all students; however, I notice that White students are the most vocal, including student resisters who often attempt to dominate classroom discussions. Choules's quote makes me think about Class A, when I realized that the White males in the class had taken over the dialogue, which is why I tried my experiment of only allowing women to speak for a day. This seemed to have frustrated Robert (A) enough to express his discontent in his course summary (from Chapter IV):

Robert (A): If I wasn't allowed to disagree with your comments, I don't think that is very fair. Even if I did disagree with your comments, I wouldn't be able to explain my disagreement because the men were being oppressed in your experiment. I found it

also unusual that the women were not oppressed the next day. So I felt that I was being singled out for the whole group of men in the class.

Gunter (2000) helps me understand this concept further, writing:

If we endeavor to empower students and thereby induce social transformation, such aims will hardly be achieved if we permit those students who possess power in the dominant culture to execute that power within the classroom, often silencing those who are already disenfranchised outside the classroom. (p.187)

After I read Gunter's chapter, I immediately thought of Alma and Julio from Class C, which was comprised of an usually large number of socially and politically conservative White students. Alma wrote the following in her course summary:

Alma (C): It was difficult to talk openly when there were a lot of conservative views arguing. It was also difficult because it is harder to debate on the side of the oppressed because it seems that we label ourselves as victims fighting "the man" who worked hard to get where he is. I believe in merit, but a lot of politics and those in power are only in power because of their connections to others in power and money.

The White students in Class C were extremely vocal and clearly dominated discussions. Julio recommended utilizing online discussion boards to include more opinions:

Julio (C): I enjoyed the class group discussions because we often talked about controversial topics that are not often discussed in classes. However, it always seemed that there was never enough time to have a full conversation on an issue and include a variety of opinions. One suggestion I have to solve this problem is to utilize the discussion boards on Blackboard. Doing this would allow more students to contribute their opinions to the discussion even if there is not enough time during class or they are too shy to participate.

While I think Julio's recommendation to use online discussion boards is worthy of consideration, I believe I need to take a deeper look into why he and Alma felt it difficult to participate in classroom discussions. I interpret Julio's comment as a failure on my part to prevent White students from dominating discussions. I disagree with Julio that there was not enough time for discussion. There was plenty of time; I just did an inadequate job facilitating

the dialogue because I allowed White students to silence students who were already disenfranchised. In actuality, the way I taught Class C “reproduced relations of domination in our classroom” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298). It appears to be a delicate, often messy, balance depending on the class dynamics. While Alma and Julio, both non-White students in Class C, felt they did not have a voice, Nick, from the White dominant group in Class C, indicated he did not have a voice.

As a social justice educator, my mission is to give voice to students who are traditionally marginalized. I want to facilitate dialogue to prevent students from dominate groups who are more confident, articulate, and educated from reinforcing dominance in the classroom. At the same time, I do not want to marginalize members from the dominant group, as the student resisters in this study have indicated. Freire passionately argued that when the oppressed are liberated, one of the worst things they can do is turn around and oppress the oppressor. He claimed it is as despicable as the initial oppression. Both Choules (2007) and Ellsworth (1989) claim that helping students understand their position of White privilege is a good step. McIntosh (2001) presents multiple examples of White privilege, which I often use in class to create critical awareness. Unfortunately, I have sometimes omitted this lesson as a result of time constraints in past semesters. After reading Choules (2007) and Ellsworth (1989) for this study, I will be sure to include a discussion on White privilege each semester from now on. It would be interesting to compare student resistance from semesters where I have included lessons on White privilege to semesters where I did not.

Implications for Future Research

In this dissertation, I have presented Freire's ideas and theories derived from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) that may be relevant to teaching for social justice in a higher education setting. Several questions emerged throughout this study that warrant further analysis. First, what challenges does an educator from the dominant race face when implementing Freire's ideas? For example, what role does my Whiteness play in the power relationship with students and how might my Whiteness inhibit a complete understanding of students from traditionally marginalized groups? Does my position in the dominant race strengthen or weaken my credibility as a social justice educator? Furthermore, what role does my Whiteness play in handling students' resistance to my implementation of Freire's ideas? In a more general sense, how does an educator's race inhibit and/or enhance his or her implementation of Freire's ideas and theories on education for liberation?

I have stated throughout this study that I embrace Freire's rejection of teacher neutrality. An analysis of the findings indicated that some students believed that I did not create a classroom environment that embraced all perspectives. How can social justice educators grapple with the possibility that the rejection of teacher neutrality may be perceived by some students as pushing their views on the students? When I was researching strategies for handling student resistance, recommendations for levels of teacher self-disclosure were contradictory. How much personal and professional information about the educator should be disclosed to students? One possible study could be a comparative analysis that addresses the

question of how do student perceptions of a teacher's pedagogy in a class where a teacher fully discloses his or her positions compare to student perceptions in a class where a teacher does not clearly state his or her position on issues of injustice. Would limiting self-disclosure lessen student resistance? Furthermore, should social justice educators accept the premise that there may always be a fraction of students who will not support Freire's ideas, regardless of how they are implemented? The impact of teacher self-disclosure on student perception and openness to new ideas and ways of knowing is an area of research that I am interested in exploring further.

Freire urged educators to respect the lived experiences of their students. I have indicated in this study that I learn about students' experiences that have shaped their views of the world by assigning personal reflections, values clarifications, team meetings, and course summaries. All of these evaluation tools require students to relate the concepts learned in class to their own lives and are ultimately linked to their grade in the course. This poses two potential problems. First, students may not feel comfortable expressing their true positions for fear that I may have an unfavorable perception of them, which they may feel will negatively impact their grades. Second, assignments are turned in throughout the semester, and I often learn valuable information about students weeks or months into the semester, or in some cases, not until the semester is over. I also stated that I learn about students' experiences through the dialogue facilitated during class, as well as through conversations before and after class. If some students perceive me to be closed off to positions other than my own, they may choose not to participate or if they do, they may not be totally honest for fear of being judged negatively by other classmates or by me. Next semester, I plan to have students complete an

anonymous survey on their positions on many of the issues we discuss in class. My intent is to gain a better understanding of the social, economic, and political positions of the students in each class at the beginning of the semester and adjust my tone and language accordingly to create a more inclusive pedagogy. This quantitative evaluation of student values at the beginning of the semester could be given again at the end of the semester to measure student transformation to address the question: do students transform their positions on issues of injustice as a result of their experiences in Education as an Agent for Change? An anonymous pre- and post-evaluation of student attitudes and beliefs could provide valuable insight into understanding students' lived experiences, as well as measure student transformation. Both have the potential of helping me improve my pedagogy.

Students in this study indicated that Freire's problem-posing education that creates opportunities for them to engage in dialogue, reflect on content, and take action is much more effective than traditional banking education. Yet, most students claimed that few teachers facilitate dialogue in their undergraduate classes. How can educators bridge this gap between a classroom pedagogy that students claim is far more effective (problem-posing) and a classroom pedagogy that many teachers of higher education implement (banking)? Why do teachers avoid using dialogue as a pedagogical tool? In which subjects and disciplines are students likely to engage in dialogue; in which ones are they least likely to engage in dialogue? I want to conduct research to find ways to promote Freire's problem-posing ideas in higher education. I could administer a self-assessment survey of the pedagogical choices of instructors from different disciplines in higher education. The survey could help determine how many teachers incorporate dialogue and how many use banking education. I would ask

the participants to explain why they choose the methods they use, as well as why they do not use other methods. The analysis of the data collected could help me determine the cause of the problem (too much banking!) and provide insight into how to encourage problem-posing education. It may also lead to the exploration of the possibility of promoting a hybrid of banking and problem-posing education, especially in content heavy courses.

A final implication for future research involves the impact love has on educational experiences. The findings in this study revealed that students embrace the idea that teachers motivated by love and those who express love for teaching, content and students are more likely to create transformational and gratifying learning experiences for their students. Students also indicated that many had not thought about the topic of love in education before taking Education as an Agent for Change. Why does the emotion of love seem absent from discussions on effective teaching? How can the role love plays in education become a critical component of pedagogical scholarship and practice? Future research could focus on how love impacts educational experiences for teachers and students seeking to move society in a more compassionate direction, with less suffering and more hopefulness, or, as Donaldo Macedo wrote in the Introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), a world “more round, less ugly, and more just” (p. 26).

Recommendations for Educators

Practical recommendations for social justice educators I derived from Freire’s theories in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) include becoming a humanist, moving from banking to problem-posing education; facilitating dialogue to address

injustices; respecting the knowledge of students' lived experiences; striving to create cultural pluralism; and embracing love, hope, and humility. I encourage social justice educators to implement Freire's liberatory pedagogy, conduct research on their implementation, and share their studies with others educators. Doctoral candidates may choose autoethnography as a research method and add their stories to the literature on Freire's pedagogy of hope. Each story has unique characteristics and may add a new dimension to interpretations of Freire. In addition, social justice educators can implement Freire's ideas in various settings and design studies to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in using Freire's ideas in their pedagogical endeavors.

Closing Comments

Many in our society are impatient. There is an underlying attitude of wanting to fix things, move on, and forget about them. I have had students tell me they are tired of talking about racism, arguing that continued dialogue perpetuates the problem. I have heard, "I did not own slaves, why am I being punished with this dialogue?" What they often do not understand is that if we do not make conscious efforts to address racism, it will continue. If it is not directed at Blacks, it will be directed at Latinos, Muslims, or whatever group seems easy to target. In our multicultural society, we must engage in an ongoing dialogue of accepting all people as fellow human beings. We cannot get complacent in this quest. Educators can help students understand this necessary ongoing struggle for mutual humanization.

According to Freire (1994), the journey for justice is never-ending. It should not be viewed as a war or battle that can be won:

Concessions, then, are the best way of coming to win, only if, sooner or later, they actually win the fight that is never over and done. Winning the fight is a process of which it can never be said, "We've won, period." When this point is absolutized, the revolution is paralyzed. (p. 175)

Macedo (2006) references Peter McLaren (1993), "Both teachers and students need to realize that justice does not already exist simply because laws exist. Justice needs to be continually created, consistently struggled for" (p. 48).

The United States has an opportunity to model for the rest of the world that different cultures can live and work together in the same communities. Striving for cultural pluralism is, perhaps, the most daunting task of all. A true cultural pluralist society will take a spiritual revolution of tolerance and love of difference and otherness. We will have to confront our fears and misconceptions about cultures we do not understand. We will have to resist the divisive messages from politicians, corporations, the media, and even our own families and friends.

There is tremendous pressure in our country to be a part of the dominant culture. Students who do not fit into the White, heterosexual, middle-class mold often feel marginalized and dehumanized. People need to realize that to move from coexisting to thriving in the same community takes great effort. For cultural pluralism to become a reality, people must move from tolerating each other's differences to embracing each other's differences. And some groups are not even at the tolerance stage.

This dissertation provided an opportunity for me to explore and articulate my life as an educator. I believe writing my stories of success and struggle implementing Freire's ideas in my classroom has helped me understand my effectiveness as a social justice educator, which has motivated me take steps to improve my pedagogy. Through this reflection, I have gained a better understanding of student resistance to social justice forms of education and have hopefully given other like-minded educators insight into the many struggles and predicaments facing social justice educators. As a result of reflecting on student resistance, as well as comparing my responses to resistance with my dialogue partner's responses, I will make efforts to be less defensive and more willing to provide opportunities for student resisters to disagree with my arguments.

I believe my story told through this autoethnographic research study strengthens my argument that social justice educators need to embrace Freire's pedagogy of hope and encourage other teachers and students in teacher education programs to be true to their desires to transform education. Adding my story to the literature on Freire will hopefully have an impact on the movement for social justice education by helping educators identify with the passion and need to change our current educational system.

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APPENDIX A
DEFINITIONS

DEFINITIONS

Freireian and Social Justice Education Terms & Concepts

1. Allies: “certain members of the oppressor class who join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation” (Freire, 1970, p. 60).
2. Antidialogical Education: oppressors “impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression” (Freire, 1970, p. 152).
3. Authentic Liberation: a human phenomenon of releasing dominating forces and freeing oneself from the constraints of society; achieved through dialogue; only the oppressed can liberate themselves and in turn must liberate the oppressors (Freire, 1970).
4. Autoethnography: a qualitative research method that involves a personal narrative of the researcher’s lived experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2003).
5. Banking Education: role of teacher is to deposit contents into the mind of the learner, withdrawing the contents at the teacher’s convenience; a one-way transfer of information from teacher to student with little emphasis on relevance of material (Freire, 1970).
6. Conscientization: critical awareness; learning to perceive contradictions; having critical historical awareness; having a “critical knowledge of reality” (Freire, 1994, p. 30); “A way of understanding the social world through political resistance and

freedom” (Ginwright, 2010, p. 9); “A theory that posits individuals and groups gain greater control of their lives and transform their previous realities by gaining critical awareness of the forces that inform their place in society: socioeconomic, political, psychological, and social” (Armstrong, 2003, p. 6).

7. Counter-hegemonic Education: educators help students develop their own language to counter the language of the oppressor (Freire, 1994).
8. Critical Education: teacher becomes facilitator; shift from banking education to problem-posing education; relevance of material is emphasized (Freire, 1970 & 1994); a pedagogy that “is employed as a tool for engaging people to transform unjust social, economic, and political conditions” (Choules, 2007, p.160).
9. Critical Theory: a conceptual framework that focuses on eradicating constraints placed on people based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.; commitment to social justice and social change (McLaren, 2003).
10. Critical Thinking: a process that “reveals underpinnings of social, cultural, psychological, and political controls and oppressions that were previously hidden from the conscious awareness of the critical thinker” (Armstrong, 2003, p. 6).
11. Cultural Invasion: a consequence of anti-dialogical education, whereby, oppressors “impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression” (Freire, 1970, p. 152).

12. Cultural Pluralism: the guaranteed right of each culture to move in mutual respect, each one freely running the risk of being different, fearless of being different, each culture being for itself (Freire, 1994, p. 136).
13. Cultural Synthesis: a method of confronting culture itself; involves an investigation in which “leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action (Freire, 1970, p. 181).
14. Culture of Domination: the notion that it is a natural human phenomenon for one powerful group to rule over a powerless group (hooks, 1994). Hooks argued this is a myth, and that domination is socially constructed.
15. Dehumanization: viewing individuals or groups of people as “less than human,” resulting in oppression without guilt; denying people knowledge (Freire, 1994). The attempt to render another as irrelevant.
16. Democratic Radicalism: synonymous with critical education (Freire, 1970, 1994).
17. Dialogue: teacher and students engage, rather than a one-way transfer of knowledge; striving to achieve significance as human beings; motivated by a “profound love for the world and for people” (Freire, 1970, p. 89).
18. Emancipatory Knowledge: helping “us understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege” (McLaren, 2003, p. 197).

19. Engaged Pedagogy: student is active participant; education that is liberatory; includes reflection and action; emphasizes well-being and holistic education (hooks, 1994).
20. Enlightenment: open to new ideas and ways of knowing (hooks, 1994).
21. False Neutrality: when educators teach from a position of neutrality, which Freire argues is impossible. This type of education perpetuates the status quo and reinforces domination over those who are marginalized (Freire, 1970, 1994).
22. Hegemony: policies developed and implemented that maintain or enhance the power of the powerful, usually at the expense of the marginalized (Freire, 1994).
23. Holistic Education: emphasizes wholeness; a union of mind, body, and spirit (Thich Naht Hahn as referenced in hooks, 1994).
24. Humanism: world and humans do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction; assumes human nature is intrinsically good; emphasizes independence, individualism, and self-fulfillment; belief that self has potential for growth and development (hooks, 1994; Freire, 1970).
25. Humanist Education: teacher coincides with students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization; ultimate goal is for students to construct a worldview that is personally meaningful; values communication through dialogue; involves reflection and action; learner-centered; teacher acts as facilitator; values autonomy and self-direction (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994).

26. Humanization: an “ontological vocation of the human being;” an “on-going, curious search” with a “passion to know;” a quest to become fully-human (Freire, 1994, p. 84).
27. Injustice: the result of hegemonic policies and social norms that are “unfair” or “unjust” to those marginalized; affected by and results in racism, classism and sexism.
28. Liberation: involves the achievement of equal rights; a human phenomenon of releasing dominating forces and freeing oneself from the constraints of society; (Freire, 1970).
29. Marginalized: those who are cast to the side; not at the center of educational policy or practice (hooks, 1994).
30. Narration Sickness: teachers fill students with contents of their narration, which is usually detached from reality; requires students to memorize mechanically (Freire, 1970).
31. Neoliberalism: a conservative movement that relies on “the market as the best organizing principle of government and society” (Torres, 2011, p. 162) It “converts public schools and universities, including research activities, into business-like institutions, subservient to corporations. Consequently, market values override the education values of human fulfillment and democratic strengthening” (Torres & Reyes, 2011, p. 11).
32. Oneness in Difference: the philosophy that we all belong to the human race and should strive for mutual humanization without losing our individual ethnic, racial and cultural

identities. Humans work together to understand and celebrate each other's differences (Freire, 1994).

33. Ontological: essential to our knowing and being (Freire, 1994).
34. Oppression: result of hegemonic policies that dehumanize individuals or groups; prevents people from achieving their full potential; "situations in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation" (Freire, 1970, p. 55).
35. Pedagogical Language of Hope: a language for classroom pedagogy that helps disclose injustices; motivated by love and hope, with the objective being a "more round, less ugly, and more just" society (Macedo, 1970, p. 26); "the cruel use of power to stifle or impede a person's needs or wishes" (Armstrong, 2003, p. 12)
36. Popular Education: education that focuses on bringing the economic classes closer together (Professor Luis Gonzaga (2003), Universidade Federal Da Paraiba, Brazil).
37. Praxis: reflection followed by action; linking thought and action (Freire, 1970; Boshier, 1998).
38. Problem-posing Education: curriculum is learner-centered; the relevance of material is stressed; teacher is no longer "one-who-teaches," but one who is also taught in dialogue with students (Freire, 1970).
39. Progressive Education: embraces the changing "human expectations and social relations, creating an environment of expanded possibility" (Ayers, 2004, p. 51)

40. Radical Pedagogy: utilizing education to bring about social, political, and economic changes in society (hooks, 1994).
41. Revolutionary Pedagogy: “discards the uncritical acceptance of the prevailing social order and its structures of capitalistic exploitation, and embraces the empowerment of dispossessed populations as the primary purpose of schooling” (Darder, 2002, p. 57).
42. Self-actualization: having a sense of purpose; realizing one’s full potential (hooks, 1994).
43. Social Justice: “critical awareness of the systems and institutions that promote or hinder progress toward social equality and respect for human dignity” (Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera, 2005, p. 32).
44. Social Justice Education: focuses on education for liberation and freedom; tackles issues of injustice; includes reflection and action; objective is a fairer, more just society; “working toward classrooms and schools that are anti-racist, multicultural / multilingual, and grounded in the experiences of our students” (Teachers for Social Justice, 2004).
45. White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy: a value structure that places importance on whiteness, wealth (or perceived wealth), and maleness. bell hooks (1994) calls for a “revolution of values” in America, arguing we must radically change this value structure if our society is going to address the ensuing injustices of racism, sexism and classism.

APPENDIX B
COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE SYLLABUS

EPFE 201: Education as an Agent for Change

INSTRUCTOR: Molly Swick

E-MAIL: mswick@niu.edu

OFFICE: Graham Hall 236
Mailbox: Graham Hall 223
Phone: 815-753-1561 (leave message)
Hours: 12-2PM Wednesdays, before and after class, or by appointment

PHILOSOPHY: I encourage the development of a desire to learn by making education meaningful and exciting. I use a variety of teaching styles and make every effort to connect new material to what students already know. My methodologies are learner-centered and participatory; the teacher acts as the facilitator of learning. Students are urged to critically analyze the world around them.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Study of the complex problems facing educational and other institutions in our multicultural or pluralistic communities and the role of education as an agent for change.

REQUIRED READINGS: EPFE Required Reading Packet; Instructor Molly Swick

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify complex problems facing education and other institutions in the community, especially with regard to the interests of self, others, community and the environment.
2. Demonstrate comprehension and insight into institutional behavior and the loci of social change.
3. Identify, compare and contrast the variety of educational processes and resources in a community.
4. Describe one's personal values and their relationship to educational agencies and the world.
5. Demonstrate the communication skills used to affect change in schools and other community agencies
6. Describe the present and potential role of the school as an agent for change in a multicultural and/or pluralistic society.
7. Laugh at Molly's jokes and honestly think she is funny.

GRADING:

400 total points possible:

A = 360-400 points

B = 320-359 points

C = 280-319 points

D = 240-279 points

F = 239 or fewer points

1. Team Meetings (100 points possible).
2. Values Clarification Assignment (60 points possible).
3. Personal Reflections (60 points possible).
4. DVD Project (40 points possible)
5. Summary of Your Course Experience (40 points possible).
6. Attendance and Participation (100 points possible).
 1. 0-1 absence = 100 points
 2. 2 absences = 80 points
 3. 3 absences = 60 points
 4. 4 absences = 40 points
 5. 5 or more absences = F

ASSIGNMENT MAKE-UP POLICY:

1. Excused absences (illness or prior arrangement with instructor): Assignments will be due the following class period for full credit.
2. Late assignments will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Important Information

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic integrity is expected of all students. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy from books, magazines, Internet, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging them (1998-99 Undergraduate Catalogue, p. 46; 1998-99 Graduate Catalogue, p. 19). If academic misconduct is suspected, the faculty member will follow the "Faculty Guide to Academic Misconduct" issued by the University Judicial Office (*Please don't make me do this!*).

SPECIAL NEEDS:

NIU abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which stipulates that no student shall be denied the benefits of an education solely by reason of a disability. Accommodations for any sort of documented physical or learning disability can be made on an individual basis.

NIU CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The NIU Community of Learners builds on knowledge, practice, and reflection to produce Exemplary Educators. The Community encompasses scholars, education professionals, and pre-service teachers in an interaction that develops the strengths that embody excellence in education. These strengths include creative and critical thinking, scholarship, and caring. Application of these strengths emerges through the collaborative efforts of a diverse community which supports lifelong learning.

CIRCUMSTANCES FOR DISMISSAL:

Cheating, plagiarism, or disruptive behavior may result in dismissal from class. This is not a joke. If your behavior is disruptive or disrespectful, you will be asked to leave class. In addition, cheating seems the norm, rather than the exception, in our current educational climate. This is the question I want you to ask yourself: “When I turn in another person’s work (in part or whole) and act as though it is my work, what does that say about my character?” Think about it. What kind of person do you want to be? Do you want to be a person with integrity or a cheater?

EPFE 201: Education as an Agent for Change

Schedule

Week 1	Introduction to Class and Instructor Student Introductions
Week 2	Creating a Loving Learning Environment <i>Where is the Love?</i> by The Black Eyed Peas <i>Work it Out</i> by Jurassic 5 & Dave Matthews
Week 3	What is the Purpose of Education? <i>Pain</i> by 2Pac <i>Beautiful World</i> by Dierks Bentley & Marit Larsen Hot Topics Brain Storming Session
Week 4	Educational Philosophies <i>If Everyone Cared</i> by Nickelback

- Week 5 Team Meeting #1: Developing an Educational Philosophy (25 points possible)
Take a Stand: Student Activism around the World by American Federation of Teachers
- Week 6 Introduction to bell hooks
Engaged Pedagogy
A Note to God by Charice Pempengco
bell hooks on Cultural Criticism & Transformation
A Place at the Table by TeachingTolerance.org
*Read *Teaching to Transgress*, Introduction & Chapter 1, by hooks
*Personal Reflections 1-2 due (20 points possible)
- Week 7 A Revolution of Values
Ms. Education of Bling by Readnex Poetry Squad
Everyone's a little bit Racist by Avenue Q
The Five Secrets
Team Meeting #2: Digesting bell hooks (25 points possible)
*Read *Teaching to Transgress*, Chapter 2, by hooks
- Week 8 Introduction to Paulo Freire
bell hooks on Freire
Framing a Pedagogical Language of Hope
- Week 9 Bill Moyers interview with Bryan Stevenson and Michelle Alexander (2010):
<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/04022010/watch.html> (economic justice)
*Read *Embracing Paulo Freire as a Pedagogical Language of Hope* Intro & Pt 1
*Values Clarification Worksheet due: What is Important to You? (60 pts possible)
- Week 10 Articulating a Pedagogical Language of Hope
Implementing Freirian Ideas in the Social Justice Classroom
Team Meeting #3: Understanding Paulo Freire (25 points possible)
*Read *Embracing Paulo Freire as a Pedagogical Language of Hope* Parts 2 & 3
- Week 11 Introduction: Using Popular Culture & Mass Media as an Agent for Change
Outfoxed
The 4th Branch by Immortal Technique
Propaganda by Dead Prez
*Personal Reflections 3-4 due (20 points possible)

- Week 12 Using Popular Culture & Mass Media as an Agent for Change: Iraq War
Why We Fight (2005)
Crying Shame by Jack Johnson
Dear Mr. President by Pink
 *Read *The Psychology of War* pp. 36-48.
- Week 13 Using Popular Culture & Mass Media as an Agent for Change: Iraq War
Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)
 *Read *The Psychology of War* pp. 49-63.
 *Personal Reflections 5-6 due (20 points possible)
- Week 14 Using Popular Culture & Mass Media as an Agent for Change: Iraq War
No End in Sight (2007) Continued
BYOB by System of a Down
1 Trillion Dollar\$ by Anti-Flag
 *Plan for Presentations
 * DVD Paper due (40 points possible)
- Week 15 *Team Meeting #4: DVD Presentations
- Week 16 Final Class:
 A Sense of Hope: Where do we go from here?
Yes We Can
Waiting on the World to Change by John Mayer
Man in the Mirror by Michael Jackson
 Summary of Course Experience due (40 points possible)

The scheduling of the activities and the teaching strategies, but not the content or course objectives, on this syllabus may be altered at any time at the discretion of the instructor. Got that? I'm the boss in the classroom ☺

I hope you have an enjoyable semester as we all strive to learn to critically think about our world. Feel free to participate as often as you are comfortable. If you have any concerns, I am available before and after class, by appointment, or via e-mail at mswick@niu.edu.

Have a great semester!!!! ☺
 Molly

P.S. If you don't come to class, "Off with your head!"

APPENDIX C
TEAM MEETINGS

TEAM MEETINGS

Team Meeting #1
Developing an Educational Philosophy
 (25 points possible)

Names (last initials please ☺) : Hot Topic: Class Meeting
 Time:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

1. Write down each team members' philosophy of education (3-5 sentences each). Indicate member's name next to response (10 points possible).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

2. List one difference and one similarity among your philosophies (2 points possible):

1.

2.

3. Describe why each team member is interested in your “hot topic.” Indicate member’s name next to response (10 points possible).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

4. List three things learned from this exercise (3 points possible):

1.

2.

3.

Team Meeting #2
Digesting bell hooks
(25 points possible)

Names (last initials please 😊):

Hot Topic:

Class Meeting

Time:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Describe each educator's philosophies of education. Next, describe how you think each educator would address your "hot topic" (15 points possible).

1. bell hooks:

2. Paulo Freire:

3. Thich Nhat Hanh:

First, list and describe five terms or concepts discussed in the Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of *Teaching to Transgress*. Next, describe how these terms affect your “hot topic” (10 points possible).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Team Meeting #3
Understanding Paulo Freire
(25 points possible)

Names (last initials, please ☺):
Time:

Hot Topic:

Class Meeting

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Describe the following terms and concepts (10 points possible, 1 point each):

1. Oppression:
2. Problem-posing education:
3. "Banking Education:"
4. De-humanization:
5. Humanist:
6. Conscientization:
7. Praxis:
8. Hegemony:
9. Liberation:
10. "Narration sickness:"

Insert Paulo Freire's concepts from the "flow chart of transformation" below in the following statement (5 points):

Addressing injustices must start with _____ among those impacted so that problems can be identified. The byproduct is _____, which involves becoming critically aware a problem exists. This awareness will lead to people reflecting and taking action on the problem, what Freire calls _____. Through this action, _____ takes place, lessening injustices, thereby _____.

Describe how to apply Paulo Freire's concepts to an issue related to your "Hot Topic." Select a specific problem related to your "hot topic." Next, describe how you might apply Paulo's theories to the specific problem (10 points):

Problem: _____

DIALOGUE:

CONSCIENTIZATION (Critical consciousness):

PRAXIS (Reflection & action):

SOCIAL CHANGE:

LESSEN OPPRESSION:

Team Meeting #4

DVD Paper & Presentation/Team Meeting #4 Guidelines
(65 points possible)

Purpose of Assignment: to understand the human impact of the Iraq War.

Directions:

*Each Team will be assigned to view one of the following documentaries:

- A. My Country, My Country (2006)
- B. Body of War (2007)
- C. Gunner Palace (2005)
- D. Alive Day Memories: Home From Iraq (2007)
- E. Ghosts of Abu Ghraib (2007)
- F. The War Tapes (2006)
- G. Brothers at War (2009)
- H. Occupation Dreamland (2005)

*Each Team Member writes a 2 page paper (40 points possible, double spaced, 12 font, 1 inch margins) that includes the following:

1. Briefly describe the premise of the film (what was the film about?).
2. Personally reflect on the film (what did it mean to you?).
3. Did your attitude about the Iraq war change as a result of viewing this film? Explain.
4. Describe how this film can be used as an agent for social change.

*Entire Team presents the documentary to the class that addresses the above questions and includes a scene from the DVD that is no more than 5 minutes long (Team Meeting #4, 25 points possible). The presentation should last approximately 15 minutes.

APPENDIX D

VALUES CLARIFICATION ASSIGNMENT

EPFE 201
VALUES CLARIFICATION ASSIGNMENT
(60 points possible)

Name:

Class Meeting Time:

Purpose Statement: Describe your sense of purpose. (*What is your life all about, and what have you been put on this earth to do? 10 points possible*):

What beliefs, values and personal convictions guide you through life? (*10 points possible*). (*For example, I believe in treating other people the way I like to be treated. Then explain why*).

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What economic, physical, social, spiritual or other factors help or hinder you in life? List three positive and three negative factors, and explain your answers (*12 points possible*).
(*For example: I receive guaranteed federal student loans. I come from a family that cannot afford to send me to school. I would not be able to go to college without student loans.*)

Positive (Helpful):

1.

2.

3.

Negative (Harmful):

1.

2.

3.

List three people in your life who *help you want to be the best person you can be*. Explain why (*6 points possible*).

1.

2.

3.

List three people in your life who *hinder this process* (These people can be from your past).
Explain why (*6 points possible*).

1.

2.

3.

Describe three characteristics about your personality that you admire (*6 points possible*).

1.

2.

3.

Describe three characteristics about your personality that you do not admire (*6 points possible*.)

1.

2.

3.

Favorite Quote or Saying about “Life” (*4 points possible*):

APPENDIX E

BELL HOOKS ON FREIRE SKIT

BELL HOOKS ON FREIRE SKIT

Teaching to Transgress: Chapter 4
hooks on Paulo Freire

Narrator:

Scene: Gloria Watkins is looking into a mirror, having a dialogue with herself. In the reflection is Watkin's writing voice, bell hooks. The entire scene is the dialogue Watkins has with her reflection and writing voice, hooks.

Watkins

It is clear that your development as a critical thinker has been greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. Can you speak about why his work has touched your life so deeply?

hooks

Years before I met Paulo Freire, I had learned so much from his work, I learned new ways of thinking about social reality that were liberatory. When I came to Freire's work, just at that moment in my life when I was beginning to question deeply and profoundly the politics of domination, the impact of racism, sexism, and class exploitation, I felt myself to be deeply identified with the marginalized peasants he speaks about. You see, I was coming from a rural, southern black experience, into the university, and I had lived through the struggle for racial desegregation and was in resistance without having a political language to articulate that process. Paulo was one of the thinkers whose work gave me a language. He made me think deeply about the construction of an identity of resistance.

Watkins

There are many readers of Freire who feel that the sexist language in his work, which went unchanged even after the challenge of contemporary feminist movement and feminist critique, is a negative example. When you first read Freire, what was your response to the sexism of his language?

hooks

For me, this is always a source of anguish for it represents a blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight. Freire's sexism is indicated by the language of his early works, notwithstanding that there is so much that remains liberatory. There is no need to apologize for the sexism. Freire's own model of critical pedagogy invites a critical interrogation of this flaw in the work.

Watkins

You see no contradiction in your valuing of Freire's work and your commitment to feminist scholarship?

hooks

It is feminist thinking that empowers me to engage in a constructive critique of Freire's work. To have work that promotes one's liberation is such a powerful gift that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed. Think of the work as water that contains some dirt. Because you are thirsty, you are not too proud to extract the dirt and be nourished by the water. Paulo's work has been living water for me.

Watkins

To what extent do you think your experience as an African American has made it possible for you to relate to Freire's work?

hooks

Growing up in a rural area in the agrarian South, among black people who worked the land, I felt intimately linked to the discussion of peasant life in Freire's work and its relation to literacy. Freire's emphasis on education as the practice of freedom made such immediate sense to me. I want to say that I felt myself included in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. One of the first Freire books I read, in a way that I never felt myself – in my experience as a rural black person – included in the first feminist books I read.

Watkins

Comment, if you will, on Freire's willingness to be critiqued, especially by feminist thinkers.

hooks

In so much of Paulo's work there is a generous spirit, a quality of open-mindedness to struggle non-defensively in print, naming shortcomings of insight, changes in thought, new critical reflections.

Watkins

What was it like for you to interact personally with Paulo Freire?

hooks

For me our meeting was incredible; it made me a devoted student and comrade of Paulo's for life.

Watkins

Were you more affected by his presence than his work?

hooks

I spent hours alone with him, talking, listening to music, eating ice cream at my favorite café... The lesson I learned from witnessing Paulo embody the practice he describes in theory was profound. Freire's work inspired me.

Watkins

Does Freire continue to influence your work?

hooks

My great wish is to do a book with Paulo... I came across these lovely passages from Paulo that echo so intimately my own worldview that it was as though, to use an old southern phrase, "My tongue was in my friend's mouth." Paulo wrote:

"I like to live, to live my life intensely. I am the type of person who loves his life passionately. Of course, someday I will die, but I have the impression that I will die intensely as well. I will die experiencing with myself intensely. For this reason I am going to die with an immense longing for life, since this is the way I have been living."

Watkins

Any last comments?

hooks

Only that words seem to be not good enough to evoke all that I have learned from Paulo. Our meeting had that quality of sweetness that lingers, that lasts a lifetime; even if you never speak to the person again, see their face, you can always return in your heart to that moment when you were together to be renewed – that is profound solidarity.

APPENDIX F

ADDITIONAL STUDENT DATA

ADDITIONAL STUDENT DATA

Rejecting Banking, Embracing Problem-Posing Education

Daniel (A): (Referring to problem-posing education) I really like this philosophy. A person is never fully educated. I know that I will never know everything. I enjoy the fact that through a simple conversation, I may obtain new information that will benefit me in the future. For example, in class we have discussed several topics that I was familiar with, but by no means we informed about. Through the comments that other students and the teacher have made about a topic, I became better informed and less ignorant about the topic.

David (A): I have had many classes in big lecture halls where the teachers don't know any other the students and don't care to know them. The professors get up on stage and go through their power point slides then let everyone leave. The majority of the people who show up for class would either be sleeping, or completely bored out of their minds and not paying attention. Then a couple days before the exam we would study all the chapters covered by the professor, and when we finished the exams, we would forget everything.

Ryan (A): In my own experiences, I have come to learn that being critically conscious is a very good thing. Instead of just believing everything I hear, and taking it as fact, I've learned to question things. Also from experience, I have learned that a more engaged pedagogical approach is more beneficial. I feel it not only benefits the students but the instructor as well. I find the traditional banking system for education not nearly as effective.

John (B): In a do-what-you-are-told-or-else society, banking of information is only adequate enough to follow what mainstream America does. This technique could lead to a mediocre life, but it's not helping the rest of society. In fact, problem-posing education can transform all these catastrophes in our country. It seems that the most important, life-changing decisions come from those high up on the totem pole and they seem to be making mistakes all the time!

Jacob (A): For me, a majority of my education has been based on the banking system, unfortunately. The few classes I have had, and the one I'm currently in, that have been based on problem-posing, have been a very fun, liberating, and exciting experience. The first class I had like this was a sociology class. A majority of the time, we would have class discussions on multiple sociological issues. Because I was forced to participate so much in these conversations, I became immersed in the material we were learning. I felt I played a part in the classroom and that feeling of being part of something got me excited and interested in the material. Problem-posing education, in my experiences has always got me to actually learn, not memorize and forget. The dialogues we had are still very memorable to this day, and I completely remember what I learned. Needless to say, problem-posing based classes are definitely my favorite.

Kaitlin (C): I totally believe in critical awareness and problem-posing education... It's so important to become critically conscious. People are so passive nowadays, but yet you hear them complain about things. How can you change anything if you're not aware or critical of what's going on? I am also totally against the banking system. How can students actually retain information for a long period of time if it's not relevant?

Katie (C): I also thought the way you (the teacher) taught the class was the best way any teacher could teach their students. I do not learn anything by cramming for an exam and making sure I know the material. I am a business major and that is all the teachers in that building do is give exams and make us cram for eight chapters at a time. I learn best by actually talking and discussing in class about ideas and the topic being discussed or doing real life projects.

Heather (C): You related everything in the class to something in our lives or something happening currently. All the topics covered in class I thought were beneficial. I was able to get something out of every class and every topic. I am planning on being a math teacher and I was able to find a few things that I will be able to use.

Affirming Dialogue as a Fundamental Educational Tool

Stephanie (A): I have experienced classrooms where dialogue among teacher and students is important. I do learn more from dialogue amongst students and teacher. I think it is important to have communication about issues within the classroom. The students and teacher bring knowledge to the classroom that is helpful and brings about a better understanding of the world.

Narumi (B): I gained knowledge and experience by listening and talking to my classmates. We shared interesting experiences and memories. It helped me develop my leadership and communication skills. I know how to talk in front of the audiences. I gained confidence present my ideas and opinions in class. I believe class discussion is a strength of this course and I strongly recommend keeping it.

Embracing Love, Hope and Humility in Education

Amanda (B): You are doing great things, Molly, and I do believe you are using education as an agent for change. The students you have coming through are the future of our world, and you are doing an excellent job with them. If everyone could take a class like this, I would have much more faith in the future of America.

Brian (A): EPFE gave me hope for the education system in the USA. It also made me happy to find a professor who was passionate about her job as I believe they all should be. One of

my favorite art history professors ever was such because of his passion and devotion to his students. I appreciate a good teacher, I am glad I had the chance to talk with you after class. The fight for education is going to a long one, and perhaps we may never live to see the fruits of our labors, but it is necessary deed, and we must forge ahead.

Student Transformation

Deja (C): I just really enjoyed the experience of EPFE 201 in whole. It was one of my best classes I have since attending Northern Illinois University. I believe next year I will not be attending this University but I will take what I have learned from this classroom into my everyday life and learning. I was taught respect and that no one person is greater than the other no matter where or how you were raised and I will not forget that.

Marquis (B): This course was an educational life experience. I was able to adapt with every group that I was put in and was capable of learning how we are similar. I was also open to learning the difference in our views. Everyone can have either the same or the different views through experience. Grasping new political educational figures can help nurture our mindset. EPFE is a course that has helped me grow as a student and most of all as an individual.

Jenna (C): Although many of the class sessions were not at all on us as individuals, but rather on education (as they should be), every class for me was a chance to look into myself and what I do or how I go about doing things that might impact whatever subject that we might be discussing on that particular day

Logan (B): As you might have guessed based on me being one class from graduating and not involved in education in any way, I only took this class to get the credit I needed to get out of here. But after taking it I'm not only glad that I did, but I'm honestly disappointed that I never took more classes like it. When you've spent four years sitting through unbearably dry and usually forgettable history lectured by old men on stools, it's a bit of a culture shock to participate in a class where you actually do things. In addition to that, as I stated earlier, I'm appreciative that this class has expanded my mental horizons a little bit more in regard to other people and their life experiences. And as I get to end my college career, I've come to realize that was the real point of coming here in the first place. So from that standpoint, this class is a total success.

Demetrius (A): People in this class are not afraid to speak what is on their mind or how they feel about something and I think that is great. If more teachers would take on the model of teaching that you do then learning will become fun and students would really try in school instead of going in thinking they are just a number to the teacher's pay roll. This course has opened up my eyes to somethings and changes my view point on other things. I believe that is how learning should go.

APPENDIX G

DIALOGUE PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

DIALOGUE PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Describe your educational philosophy.
2. When and how were you introduced to the ideas of Paulo Freire?
3. What Freireian ideas resonate with your educational philosophy?
4. How have Freire's ideas impacted your pedagogy?
5. What Freireian concepts related to hope do you think are applicable to the North American classroom?
6. Have you been met with any resistance to Freire? If yes, describe the resistance, as well as how you handled the resistance.
7. What recommendations do you have for current and future teachers wanting to incorporate Freire's ideas in their own classroom?