1999

Culture and communication in the colonization of the classroom

Rebecca Regosin
San Jose State University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.pxxr-d4f4>

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**CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE COLONIZATION OF THE
CLASSROOM**

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of the Division of Teacher Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Rebecca Regosin

August, 1999

UMI Number: 1396196

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APPROVED FOR THE DIVISION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Dr. Victoria Harper
Dr. Victoria Harper

Dr. Carolyn Nelson
Dr. Carolyn Nelson

Dr. Roberta Ahlquist
Dr. Roberta Ahlquist

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

William Fish

ABSTRACT

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE COLONIZATION OF THE CLASSROOM

by Rebecca Regosin

This research seeks to understand what teachers consider to be their roles in promoting what they believe to be the purposes of education. While the data will reveal the democratic intentions of educators to establish equitable and cooperative conditions for learning in the classroom, it will show the degree to which antidialogic action systematically and institutionally functions to inhibit such intentions. Conversational interviews have been conducted with teachers and set in relationship to educational theories to illuminate this process active in American classrooms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to Kathy Fahl, whose insight and wisdom graced this thesis. Thank you to Dr. Carolyn Nelson with whom my questions were always welcome. Also, thanks to Dr. Roberta Ahlquist for encouraging me in her unique way to find the voice of my own experience. The most grand and heartfelt thank you to the extraordinary energy and support of Dr. Victoria Harper. Her awesome presence settled the mind, uplifted and soothed the spirit of a young woman, wife, mother, student, teacher. Great respect and appreciation to my mom and dad, whose lifelong dedication to education continues to inspire my chosen path. Kevin and Jacob, thank you for staying out of the house all of those Saturday mornings. You are and will always be the wind beneath my wings.

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PROLOGUE

REFLECTIONS OF A STUDENT

In the process of becoming a teacher, I have been asked repeatedly to reflect upon my own experiences as a student. During one of my research interviews I made the comment that, as a new member to the profession, I have had little “practical” experience with the purposes of education that function in the classroom. My participant reminded me that I have had a tremendous amount of experience— as a student. And this is true. It has been my growing experiences as a student in public grade-school, the university and now in a graduate program that have funded the interests, assumptions and reflections in this research. I suggest in the chapters that follow that education must provide students with opportunities to critically evaluate their understandings of experience. They need to develop the language and skills needed to negotiate their own position in the world and acquire the language and knowledge that will enable them to affect that world. Until I entered The Academy for Critical Research, a unique and alternative graduate program on teaching and learning two years ago, my education had not served this purpose.

I was raised and educated in Irvine, “behind the orange curtain” of Orange County in Southern California. My parents were educators, my father a professor in the university and my mother, a K-12 teacher. We socialized among intellectual families. I was taught that we were “liberals” in my family, offset from the “conservatism” within which we

lived. My parents and our closest friends were Democrats. We were Jews and therefore believed we understood and were sensitive to issues of bias, intolerance, and social inequity. Our economic comfort surpassed serving our basic needs and, in such a position, we were able to stand apart from the vivid realities of those less fortunate. Our social politics, however, stood mostly in theory. My reality was insulated by being born into the White and middle-class dominant culture of American society. The circles within which I lived my life were populated by members of my racial and social class, therefore my environment, both physically and psychologically, protected my image of myself. My identity was mirrored everywhere and my reality, my worldview was created and maintained in this one dimension. I critiqued the experience of living in the abstract and formed judgments of others from this limited perspective. Having the “fortune” to stroll an intellectually and socially nonproblematic path, I was not consciously aware of how my life was institutionally advantaged and separated from members of minority cultures, many of whose lives were lived in relationship to mine, at a disadvantage.

I was born into a caste and class system of American society and socialized within educational institutions to lead a predestined and unexamined life. As Peggy McIntosh (1989) confirms in her analogy of the “privileged knapsack,” I carried with me the props of power in the form of racial, class and cultural advantage. I was equipped with “codebooks, passports, visas, blank checks and tools,” the cultural capital which allowed me to navigate seamlessly through my White, middle-class world. As a member of the dominant culture in America, I never understood, nor did anyone consider it necessary to point out, that my Whiteness constituted a racial and cultural identity that placed me

within a relationship of power among other racial and cultural identities. By considering this unmarked category of Whiteness as nonracial, we can ignore our participation in and responsibility for a national history of racial and cultural tension, the present aftermath that supports our cultural position of authority.

In the first semester of my teacher-education program at San Jose State University, I took a required course on the sociology of education. I read the works of Kozol (1991), Delpit (1988), and McIntosh (1989), among others. I grew increasingly distressed and uncomfortable as I began to position and reflect upon my experiences within the presence of the realities these authors presented. I was shocked to find, as Kozol revealed, the degree to which quality of education and access to academic and professional success varies, determined largely by one's political and social power. I began to understand, thanks to McIntosh's accurate and provocative articulation of the experience of White privilege, how being of the dominant White, middle-class culture of power in American society, my path to success had been protected and supported by the very system Kozol exposed. In an essay in response to Kozol's Savage Inequalities, I wrote,

How can this be? My heart is aching. Who is responsible? Why didn't I know about this? What am I going to do?... It is a nightmare, but mine is different. Who am I, what can I do?

Becky Thompson (Thompson and Tyagi 1996) uses a metaphor of "border crossing" in describing her life experiences moving within and across divisions of race, class, and culture and entering what, at times, felt like "foreign" spaces. Her experiences "traveling" through loose and unfamiliar understanding of herself provided her with

enough “psychic restlessness” to transform her identity along more informed lines of perspectives and experience. Although I appreciated Thompson’s reflections, I felt somehow that my life had been denied the opportunity to “cross borders.” I felt cheated. Had I had the chance to enter such cognitive liminal spaces, I too might have been awarded other perspectives from which to situate my experiences among those of others, consequently gaining the opportunity and distance to critically evaluate them. At the time, and I think at the moment when my thesis topic was born, I wrote,

What irritates me most concerning my lost opportunities to cross borders points a finger at the educational institutions I attended. Each had a job to support my evolution as a *conscious* human being, a critical and creative thinker whose education might serve others. As James Baldwin addresses, “the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society” (Simonson 1988, 4). The first time I read this, my view was detached, as I have been well trained to learn objectively and in theory. Later did I realize that I was included in this “process” and it was my education designed to perpetuate society’s aims. As I look back on my experiences in liberal arts and humanities courses constructed to critique the “society” in which they occurred, I realize that it was the institution of education itself that inhibited my growth; It failed to lead me to question my position in that society.

I attended UC Santa Cruz with other middle-class Whites and we sat and philosophized about the world in which we had little experience. We pretended to cross borders as we experimented with our identities, but our wanderings were controlled by the boundaries of race and class that we shared. Most of us went to college on our parents’ bill, lived on top of a hill in a suburban neighborhood, spent leisurely hours discussing the abstract, closing the days with yoga class or a walk in nature. Not one moment in all of those formative years did anyone ask that I critique this advantaged life. We were led to believe that we were gaining “knowledge” with which we could better do our part, but the knowledge we were handed prohibited most of us from fulfilling that aim. Ultimately and realistically we knew that we could stand on the authority of the credentials we were “earning.” What we didn’t know was that that credential was the ticket to maintaining our dominant position and power, and not seeing it as such, symbolic of prolonging our ignorance. For how many of us was this the norm? And where were the voices of truth that could have saved me from this socialization?

At that point I felt that, because I came from a socially, economically, and privileged perspective of experience, I did not have the right nor the understanding to comment on or affect the institutionalized injustices I was bearing witness to. It was as if a thick glass wall stood between me and the rest of the world. I felt powerless. I didn't understand how I had gotten to where I was, so distanced and disassociated from the experiences of others, though I was beginning to see that other experiences of living existed.

At this stage, I journeyed through a range of emotions as I stood on various platforms, attempting to articulate and reflect upon my developing understandings of my experiences. My initial response to the social injustices I was beginning to identify was characterized by a desire to "help" those less fortunate than me, not recognizing at the time that *my* consciousness was oppressed. I lacked the language and critical understandings that could assist me in conceptualizing how social stratification and discrimination had included me in its process. I named myself as the oppressor because I felt that somehow I was to blame for the social inequities which had proven to operate at my advantage. Out of confusion, I felt angry. I wanted to shout that I too had suffered in my life and I searched hard to name my obstacles. I used my personal history to help me find instances where I too had to "fight along the way."

In truth, my consciousness needed to believe that oppression was colorless and classless so I could focus my attention on what makes us all the same. It was a much easier task than accepting how we are different, and thus leaving myself open to entering that liminal space where I would struggle with how that difference differently affects us.

So I kicked and screamed in denial and shame as I began to understand how I had been misguided, manipulated into relying upon what McIntosh calls the “myth of meritocracy” (1989). I had internalized the assumption, culturally constructed for me, that the life we live in this world is determined by our moral will, by how we *choose* to live. This faith had set the stage for my belief that each of us is responsible for our own success. In recognizing that others had not had the “privileges” I had cashed in on, deductive reasoning suggested for me that the credit of triumph was not entirely my own. As I began to understand how “privilege” had contributed to what I had considered to be “earned” success, my ego was faced with the realization that others had succeeded without those same privileges, if at all. Here, my vision of myself as an “ambitious” human being was becoming thoroughly disrupted as was the culturally, socially and politically imbedded “truth” I had internalized that I am living in a fair and neutral society.

As my teacher-education program continued, I was introduced to and informed by post-modern perspectives. I began to conceptualize how I had been institutionally programmed into a position of social and intellectual isolation; My “knowledge,” my patterns for interpreting experience, was culturally constructed, imbedded with historical, political, and social traditions that maintained authority through systematic processes of oppression. These patterns served to organize my understandings of myself and my life as a member of the White, middle-class dominant culture in American society. In exploring the workings of socialization, I became aware that I had been a victim, born into predetermined and culturally sanctioned attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and behaviors that

molded the understandings I was to internalize and uphold to such a degree that they had dictated and limited my visions of reality.

I came to own as mine the critical post-modern, constructivist interpretation of “knowledge” as that which we collectively, inclusively and from a more socially just perspective, create and reconceptualize from both past and present testimonies on the experience of living. In the exploration of theories of the sociology of knowledge, I came to value and validate the voice of my experiences as worthy of contributing to the grand dialogue on human experience. No longer did I view my own sheltered experiences as unqualified to speak to, or incapable of acting upon, the social and institutionalized injustices that manipulated my world. If my “knowledge,” my understanding, was institutionally and socially (humanly) constructed, then it could be re-constructed. So we dialogued. My professors, my mentors, continued to lead my peers and me into the creation of extended and critical conversations between ourselves, the voices of the texts from which we read, and with the historically, politically, socially, economically, and culturally imbedded assumptions which had informed our consciousness. These dialogues broke the institutionalized silence that had marginalized minority voices, including our own, from the taken-for-granted legitimacy of abstract and objective “knowledge” we had internalized about living in the world. We *entered* those cognitive liminal spaces where our assumptions, which had funded and situated our identities, were problematized. We investigated how prior interpretations of our experiences were coated, or rather infested with socially sanctioned messages.

And thus, I began to understand that the “knowledge” I had been fed, as a member of the dominant culture of power, was manipulated specifically to insure the maintenance of a status quo which supported its position of power. The suppression of my consciousness had been vital to that effort. My “privileged” life was designed to protect my consciousness from making the connection that, while I have had more, others have had less. For if I had been able to draw that conclusion, I would then be responsible to it. And in such a position of understanding, I might take political and social action to alter that inequity. It was in the deconstruction of the formation of these culturally constructed and sanctioned understandings, as I began to have the language and critical perspective to name the process by which I had been denied exposure to alternative representations of reality, that I have been empowered with a stance from which *to act*.

I feel liberated. I have emerged from the oppressive domination of a cultural authority that had positioned me, psychologically and intellectually in a “privileged” place of ignorance and ineptitude. Now I am comfortable saying, “yes, I am a White woman from an economically and socially ‘advantaged’ background, so? What do I have to offer the revolution for a more just society? A lot.” As Peggy McIntosh (1989) says,

It is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use our arbitrarily-awarded power to reconstruct power systems on a broader base (12).

Now I have a method by which to reconstruct those power systems. I have had a transformational learning experience as a graduate student. Grounded in theory and practice, this learning assisted me to recognize and evaluate the “cultural knowledge” that, until now, imprisoned me in a world of taken-for-granted beliefs and unquestioned

privilege. I have come to believe that education must invest individuals with this process. I know it works in the classroom because I have been there. My consciousness reflects its transformational potential. Today, I understand how my “knowledge” was designed to perpetuate the aims of a socially stratified society. Now I have a voice, as I take part in the social re-construction of more egalitarian forms of knowledge which represent a broader range of human experience. I have taken part in what may serve as an educational model for how we may uproot, through the use of a democratic pedagogy, the deeply-held and internalized interpretations of reality children are hand-fed. Through the cultivation of an understanding of how our lives are culturally dictated, we are unleashed from them and empowered to cross cognitive “borders” where affirming our rights and abilities to reconstruct newer visions of multiple realities, can enable us to act upon and transform our world.

CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE + COMMUNICATION + CONSCIOUSNESS = ACTION

In that education always involves communication, and therefore socialization, we must acknowledge the dual nature of socialization as having the potential to liberate thought and facilitate the communication of new ideas to others; it is also a binding force that may prevent people from seeing how their lives are shaped by social conversation.

(Bowers 1984, 31)

Teachers, intricately involved in the everyday lives of children, play a significant role in shaping their current understandings of lived experience and their expectations for the future. As educators responsible for socializing students to interact and navigate within social contexts both inside and out of the classroom, teachers must ask themselves if education is an appropriate, if not necessary medium through which they can counter the realities presented by Merryl Hammond and Ray Collins (1993):

Children need critical faculties and skills to cope with the incessant negative lessons coming at them from all directions. We must counter the slick, sick media images and prevailing cultural norms through which violence, war, oppression, discrimination, and excessive consumption are accepted uncritically or, worse, glorified (3).

Assuming teachers respond to the need to address these realities, to counter the “prevailing cultural norms” through which current social issues have arisen, they must first be able to recognize how those norms are communicated. This research seeks to understand how teachers view the constitution of “knowledge” and in what ways they determine how conceptualizations of “reality” are to be communicated through curriculum. How do teachers understand the role of education and their position in it? In

what ways do teachers recognize their implicit power in the classroom to define “what is” in the organization of curriculum? In what ways are their own learned and taken-for-granted “ways of being” evidenced in the classroom?

Education functions to socialize children to think and act in ways that are deemed appropriate for them in social contexts. A form of “cultural knowledge” is learned as children acquire the habits, norms, and ways of thinking that are essential to fitting into society. Though the teaching of this functional knowledge begins at birth as new members are initiated into and accepted by social society with the steady acquisition of language and developmentally appropriate behavior, institutions of education have been given the authority to term much of these learned ways of being as “knowledge.” What often goes unrecognized by educators however, is the relationship between what teachers communicate as “knowledge” and our human participation in socially constructing its content. Although teachers may be aware that they are primary instructors in the continuing process of socializing children in basic functional skills, they often fail to understand that the process of socialization they themselves act within extends deeper into the more abstract, symbolic representations of the everyday language that they use to conceptually organize their students’ understandings of reality.

The theoretical background supporting the notion of socialization has primarily been of interest to the field of psychology; the cognitive processes involved in assimilating and accommodating external information into individual’s “schemas” or “conceptual maps” in the formation of a perception of reality are generally viewed as psychological events. But the implications of how the process occurs has a direct connection to how we

may come to understand the inherent workings of socialization in the ways in which we “educate” individuals.

Socialization by its nature, lives off communication. As Chet Bowers (1984) affirms, “social reality is shared, sustained, and continuously negotiated through communication” (35). From birth, we learn from others how to operate and take part in the social world. The acquisition of language is a primary indicator that a child has learned, been socialized into appropriate ways of expression. This basic experience is repeated with every social interaction as individuals initiate and are initiated into a collective vision of what we consider to be reality. Our ways of thinking that we have internalized through the process of being socialized have a human origin. Bowers (1984) speaks to the way in which such a natural process might escape our recognition as he explains that,

The dynamics of how our own everyday sense of reality is constituted through interaction with others is such an integral part of how we experience the world, that we generally lack the necessary distance and objectivity to see it clearly (32).

In other words, as we mutually support socially sanctioned ways of being, we take part in both our own socialization and the socialization of others in such a tacit, natural, subconscious way, that we may fail to realize that we have taken part at all.

In the classroom still, teachers may fail to recognize that they have been successfully socialized (passed all the right tests, received their credentials, been hired by formal institutions) and that they carry with them from birth, the beliefs systems that have supported their survival and growth in the social world. Many may not realize that they are the continuing socializing agents of the children they teach who are within conceptual

map-building, reality-formational years. Thus, subconsciously these teachers communicate their own taken-for-granted and culturally imbedded assumptions about living as the data of children's present socialization experiences. Because they are "educators," most of what they transmit is powerfully determined to be "knowledge," as teachers hold a form of cultural authority in this regard. In effect, teachers pass on their own "recipes of knowledge" that have been socially constructed throughout their personal lived experience. They also transmit, perhaps more consciously, more formally organized and socially legitimized bodies of "knowledge" within the canons from which they teach.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) present a theory of the social construction of knowledge that connects how individuals traditionally conceptualize knowledge with the understanding that patterns of thinking have a human origin-- that what is considered to be worthy of acknowledging as fact and truth have been derived from socially negotiated and constructed visions of reality. From this theory, one may see that the power to decide what holds value as "knowledge" resides with human beings in our social culture who hold the power to define, speak of, publicize, and frame human experience. Though teachers may not retain authorship of much of what they teach, they do have the power to choose which organizations of "knowledge" they will legitimize. Teachers also have the power to make explicit the understanding that the authority to define what children learn as "knowledge" of social reality is an human authority, and thus may be challenged should it not serve an individual or a collective group.

Relationships of power then, are enacted in the classroom. As Gouldner (1979) states, "inequality is rooted in the significant others' power to define 'what is'" (in Bowers

1984, 45). Teachers in the position of choosing what will be communicated and thus integrated into the children's conceptual notions of reality have the power to organize how that reality will be understood and internalized. Beyond this, they name the world, or choose the outside agents who will name the world for many students of whose experiences they are completely unfamiliar or even cognizant. This inequity of power to organize lived experience does not begin nor end in the classroom, but it could, potentially, be challenged there.

Communication in the realm of education is embedded in multiple representations of language (i.e. what is read, written and spoken). In this sense, language becomes a symbolic representation of reality, removed from the tangibility of children's direct experience. Children then rely upon symbolic representations of language to define "truth" as they are dependent on funds of knowledge not their own (Moll 1992). Bowers (1984) emphasizes the power of language as he states,

Language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations. This capacity of language to represent meanings as objectively real and independent of the individuals who communicate them makes it difficult for participants to recognize that meanings, values, interpretations- what becomes stabilized symbolically as objective knowledge- have a human origin (46).

Bowers uses the metaphor of socialization as a language game in which the teacher has the power to make "moves" in what she communicates (the primary medium of socialization) through personal interaction and within the knowledge of curriculum which holds the position of cultural authority. These moves may further bind the student to the hold traditional roles of authority have over naming existence, or liberate children from it by

making explicit the potential of the power of their voices to take part in the game by identifying the places where “knowledge” has been theoretically abstracted from human authorship (Bowers 1984). Thus, as it becomes explicit that “knowledge” itself is a human construction, it remains clear that it may also be humanly re-constructed in ways that allow the individual to take part in the process. Here, teachers have the unique capacity to raise and value the voice of the individual to a level where the individual may renegotiate what has been institutionally taken-for-granted as “truth.” Bowers refers to, within the theory of the social construction of knowledge, what may be developed within students as a form of “communicative competence,” which he describes as “an individual’s ability to renegotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others” (Bowers 1984, 2).

An analysis of a document published by the California State Board of Education serves as a example of how formally accepted bodies of knowledge might be focal points for examining our perceptions of our responsibilities as teachers in the classroom. The *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools K-12* requires, as one of its curriculum strands, that educators teach to the concept of “Civil Values, Rights, and Responsibilities,” with the intent to foster a sense of what it refers to as an “Ethical Literacy,” as we share citizenship in a “Democratic society.” The Framework states that children need to understand that “a democratic society depends on citizens who will take individual responsibility for their own ethical behavior, control inclinations towards aggression, and attain a certain level of civility on their own by choosing to live by higher rules of ethical conduct” (History-Social Science Framework and Criteria Committee

1997,10-23). Here, in the language of the document, abstract notions of “ethical behavior” and “democracy” are taken-for-granted as values expected to be communicated to children and organized in their consciousness as representative of the way we are to live in American society. Discussion of whether or not children experience “ethical” and “democratic” living as their personal realities is left to the judgment and taken-for-granted assumptions of the teacher, though it is clear that the role of education here is to promote the ideals of the theories whether they speak to the realities of the students or not. As a result,

The student is likely to encounter simplistic interpretations, a limited vocabulary that contains typifications that deproblematize the part of culture being studied, and reinforcement from the teacher for internalizing into his or her explanatory framework the teacher’s recipe knowledge (Bowers 1984, 60).

Should students have the opportunity to enter cognitive spaces of conceptual map-building where traditional roles of authority are challenged or delegitimized, the possibility arises for them to establish new forms of authority that may determine what constitutes reality, including the voices of their own experiences as valid sources. To this end, educators must be willing to make explicit the social nature of the construction of what constitutes formally accepted versions of “knowledge,” and therefore, traditionally taken-for-granted beliefs and social habits children have internalized through processes of socialization must be *first* recognized, and *then* deconstructed for analysis and renegotiation. The ability to read or decode the assumptions and conceptual organization that underlies our ways of being in the world is what Bowers (1984) defines as “cultural literacy” (2). Perhaps within the growth of communicative competence, children will be

developing the “critical faculties and skills” suggested by Hammond and Collins (1993) as needed, to cope with and actively counter the prevailing cultural norms responsible for the social ills of American society.

This research has been designed to bring forward the voices of teachers in regards to what they understand to be the purposes of education from both institutional and personal standpoints. In Chapter Two, I present a theoretical foundation for understanding socialization processes in the effort to frame the manner by which individuals internalize the taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions of traditionally authorized constructions of “knowledge.” I have added to this picture some insights from Paulo Freire’s (1970) theories of dialogical and antialogical action, drawing a relationship between the process of cultural socialization and an ideology of oppression. Here my intent is to extend the reader’s consideration beyond recognizing the process by which “knowledge” is socially constructed and “transmitted” through culture to an awareness of this process as oppressive in nature. I will draw upon Freire’s concept of “banking education” as the logical educational system of an oppressive society seeking to prevent critical reflection and analysis in its people. The elements and purposes of dialogue are reviewed in Chapter Three and an argument is offered, funded by the theories of Nicholas Burbules (1993) and Freire (1970), for developing a praxis in the classroom which will allow the potential for students and teacher to recognize, deconstruct and renegotiate in communication, the effects of socialization which manipulate and bind them within symbolic and limited representations of reality. Chapter Four outlines the philosophy and structures for the chosen methodology which emphasizes a process of

collaborative, reflexive and action-oriented meaning-making. In Chapter Five, the voice of the teacher speaks to the issues of socialization, knowledge, and conditions of oppression in light of the theories presented in previous chapters. Chapter Six, in conclusion, revisits the notion of knowledge as power and reflects on the degree to which it may be manipulated, evaluated and reconstructed in classroom walls.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIALIZATION AND CONDITIONS OF OPPRESSION

A theory of education that arises out of a concern with the future adequacy of the assumptions on which our culture is based and with people's ability to exercise communicative competence in reconstructing essential elements of our cultural maps, must be grounded in a careful understanding of the complexities of socialization. Unless the dynamics of socialization are taken into account, along with culture's pattern for organizing reality, educational theories are likely to be little more than expressions of well-intended visions that have little chance of being recognized anywhere.

(Bowers 1984, 32)

How does an attitude or belief become so apparently common in a culture that it is understood or recognized by many as a "norm?" On the one hand, there are "prevailing cultural norms" as Hammond and Collins (1993) mention, that appear to govern how individuals act and interact in society, and yet these behavioral and attitudinal "norms" cannot possibly all be democratically nominated and collectively chosen by all members of society as the ideal and desirable "way to be." To consider societal "norms" we must acknowledge that the term is inevitably exclusive. While members of society are affected by "the norm," only some were likely involved in creating and sanctioning it as such. For any one "way of being" to become understood as so "right" as to be considered "normal," it must have some form of power or prestige over other less noticeable or valued ways of being. In this light the question then becomes, what is the nature of the power inherent in a norm becoming a norm? The following chapter is designed to bring understanding as to

how cultural norms are communicated among individuals, but more importantly, the discussion of relative theories should reveal how the existence of what we collectively and as individuals support as “the norm” is manipulated by political and social issues of power.

The Sociology of Knowledge and Cultural Socialization

Bowers (1984) building on Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Gouldner (1979) describes how an understanding of the theory of the sociology of how we come to value and define “knowledge,” what becomes our “cultural knowledge,” can be utilized to further our understandings of how norms are established, communicated and maintained in social society. His premise relies on the notion that through the process of socialization, individuals are initiated into historically predetermined and socially sanctioned attitudes and behaviors or “ways of being” that influence how experience is conceptually organized. Bowers (1984) states,

As a medium through which we move, *culture* provides the information codes that regulate our patterns of thought, body language, use of space, social interaction, rituals, and economic and political systems. (*italics added*) (5).

“Culture” then is personified as an active force in the life of the individual. But what is culture and how is its force imposed?

“Culture” itself is a social construction. It is only a descriptive term to represent the active ways of a particular group of people: the customs, habits, beliefs, attitudes that have a human origin in conceptually organizing the experience of living. It exists only because individuals give it form and texture, and it is individuals within each generation who pass it on through socialization to further generations as a form of blueprints for how

life has been designed to be lived. In this light, individuals serve as unconscious carriers of their own culture.

The process of socialization performs the function of older members initiating newer members into the collective culture. A child learns through the everyday acts of living, the habits, attitudes, and ways of thinking essential for fitting into larger society and is dependent upon others to provide the “recipes” for conducting everyday life and for how experience is to be accommodated into his/her physical, social, emotional and expanding conceptual development. The acquisition of language is a basic but primary example of how one “receives” from others the “codes” necessary to be understood and communicate meaning in the social world. As the range of social interaction increases in the life of the individual, the individual’s stock of “recipe knowledge” increases as does the individual’s abilities to demonstrate and utilize socially sanctioned behaviors and communicative responses. Nicholas Burbules (1993) affirms,

Our ratiocinative capacities are formed by the internalization of communicative interactions we have with others from a very early age. We start by having them guide, explain, question, or argue with us and end by representing this dialogue within ourselves (11).

What is significant is the degree to which our patterns of thinking are not only socially constructed, but how they are supported and maintained in a manner so implicit, individuals are cognitively unequipped to understand nor analyze their own developing life attitudes and beliefs. Thus, these attitudes become nonproblematic as they reflect and become a part of what Bowers refers to as “the cultural unconscious.” The process of socialization is experienced on a tacit level such that its effects are internalized as a natural way of being.

Consequently, individual's understandings of reality are influenced and manipulated by others' definitions of appropriate and valid ways of being. These "ways" are transmitted between individuals through multiple forms of communication. How we validate what is to be included in representations of a "reality" is through unspoken, spoken and written language, where human voice has the power to identify, describe, sanction and ultimately organize human experience. Thus, what individuals receive through the process of socialization is a predetermined, subjective, limited and inevitably biased *human* representation of an external reality, separate from their own lifeworld and funds of knowledge (Moll,1992). This cultural "knowledge," integrated through socialization into the individual's understandings, serves the purpose of allowing and encouraging the individual to understand reality in a manner similar to the reality experienced by others. Bowers (1984) explains, "communication is not only essential to sustaining the agreed upon conventions of belief and action, but in initiating new members into the socially shared knowledge" (35). What is often unrecognized then is how an individual's perceptions and behaviors towards the experience of living that arise out this programmed vision of reality is not autonomously and critically developed but filtered through a cultural lens, infected with the attitudes, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions of others. Bowers confirms,

What we think and experience is influenced by the cultural maps or schemas we carry around in our heads. In effect, these cultural maps represent historically grounded message systems that cause thoughts and feelings to be organized in ways that reflect the categories, assumptions and patterns of thinking acquired through socialization to the culture's way of organizing reality (14).

The Experts and the Language of “Cultural Knowledge”

Who are the others who have organized the “culture’s” reality? They are those who have been given the authority, a form of cultural authority, to qualify experience. Though members of society have the ability to influence others’ understandings through communication, as conversation has the potential to mutually inform individual’s perceptions, some members of society have been given more authority than others; there exists a social hierarchy as to whose “knowledge” is and will be validated. The understandings of parents, teachers, and “experts” in particular fields are often considered as more informed and thus their “knowledge,” also funded by the process of socialization, is abstracted from its human origin and reflected to others as a form of truth or objective reality. Without recognizing the connection between this “expert knowledge” and its human origin, individuals are blinded as to how they are being culturally influenced.

“Expert knowledge” is communicated and sanctified through language. Language is a medium for the expression of thought, but once it is communicated, spoken or written, it becomes only a representation of an idea, abstracted from a human thought. In this sense, language is only a symbolic *code* to communicate ideas between individuals. When language is read from written form it is even more difficult to identify the human authorship behind the ideas being communicated, as the author is physically absent from the communicative exchange. Thus, “expert knowledge” is often more of a “symbolic knowledge,” representing experience through words and images language is capable of invoking. In his discussion of symbolic knowledge, Bowers invokes a metaphor coined by Alfred Korzybski who says, “a map is not the territory” observing a similar relationship

between language and experience: language is capable of mapping experience, but it is not the same as the experience itself.

“Expert Knowledge” in the Classroom

This is a crucial point in understanding how far reaching the effects are of individuals internalizing “experts” linguistic representations of experience. In the classroom, teachers, themselves considered “experts,” validate the “knowledge” of other “experts” in the design of curriculum and the content of canons from which they teach. Thus, the students’ vision of reality is dependent upon what representations the teacher selects, legitimatizes, and reinforces that will serve as symbolic knowledge, the codes that enable the student to apply meaning to direct experience. In this sense, what becomes real, or what is promoted and institutionally sanctioned, is a simplification of the complexity of how people actually live in a society. This is a serious matter in the classroom, for through the process of socialization the students’ world is being defined for them in this packaged form. More critically, an understanding of their own identities is being shaped in that world. And because the influence of being socialized into this reality is experienced at such a tacit level, students are mostly unarmed to counter what may not serve their personal visions or experiences.

What is not made explicit in the classroom is how both the understandings of the teacher and the conceptual content of the curriculum, the “expert knowledge” which funds it, is influenced by culture’s historically grounded systems and theoretical foundations for organizing the human experience. The traditional beliefs, expectations, and assumptions of those who have had the power throughout history to qualify experience have become

the taken-for-granted and validated ways of seeing and being in the world. As these ways are left unchallenged by the nature of socialization to uphold the status quo, they become self-perpetuating and survive as the “norm” in future generations. What is then communicated as representative of “reality” to students in the classroom is often archaic and invalid representations of a limited, but socially authorized set of ideas.

Bowers (1984) reveals how the recognition of the human authorship or social origin of knowledge, as discussed in this chapter, suggests that knowledge is not neutral; what is communicated in the curriculum is *someone’s* knowledge. Lisa Delpit (1988) argues that the transmission of certain forms of knowledge over others in the curriculum serves social interests in the larger society. She explains how the white, male, middle-class dominant culture in American society has throughout Western history been given the authority to provide the conceptual organization for teaching strategies and curriculum content which reflects the dominant culture’s experience of living. This notion contains two primary ramifications: the curriculum inevitably fails to represent the reality lived by students of minority cultures, and those students who come from the majority culture come better prepared, equipped with what Delpit calls “cultural capital” to interact and succeed within a curriculum that reflects their lifeworld outside the classroom.

Most teachers, socialized and trained within the knowledge of the majority culture of power, are often unaware of the ways in which they are supporting and maintaining forms of communication that are implicitly understood by only a selection of their students; those students familiar with the “codes” necessary to operate within the majority culture’s organization of reality are better able to understand, need less explicit

communication as to the rules which govern the culture of curriculum. Therefore, they are more likely to succeed in school and thus in larger society, maintaining the social, political, and economic power which supports the majority culture's status. Bowers (1984) states,

Public schools are organized on the basis of tacit understandings about what constitutes cultural capital; students who possess the requisite amounts of cultural capital are thus processed and certified differently from students who come from homes that do not provide a rich and complex symbolic environment (24).

Because most teachers are unaware of their power to alienate some students from opportunities for success, in the ways in which they fail to make explicit the "codes" within which they operate, teachers unknowingly become the gatekeepers of the status quo of society.

As previously mentioned, the process of socialization communicates beliefs and attitudes about life on a tacit level where individuals are cognitively disabled to evaluate the merit of what they are internalizing. As the majority culture in American society has maintained the power, controlled the market to conceptually organize the experience of living in the language of "expert knowledge," what is presented as truth and fact is considered to be morally neutral, normal and average; thus, as individuals are socialized without the awareness of the human authorship of such fact, the voices of minority cultures, which reflect as testimony the existence of other realities, are silenced and fade into the margins of the discourse on the experience of living. Peggy McIntosh (1989) reflects on the nature by which being of the majority culture confers privilege and

advantage members are socialized to accept uncritically, precisely because the voices of opposition have been suppressed. She says,

I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a pattern of assumptions which were passed on to me as a white person. There was *one* main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those who could control the turf. My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major ways, and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture I could also criticize it fairly freely (*italics added*) (11).

The authority that traditional beliefs and values of culture have over the individual makes criticizing or critically analyzing its systems of conceptual organization difficult. McIntosh reveals that being of the dominant culture, she was able to “criticize it fairly freely.” She could do so because, being of the majority culture, she had an “invisible package of unearned assets,” was equipped with the “cultural capital” that Delpit (1988) refers to that made navigating within the culture easier than those of society’s minority cultures. McIntosh (1989) explains how her “unearned assets” were “like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (10).

But even equipped with such assets, an individual influenced by culture, internalizes its organization of reality such that “criticizing” it becomes cognitively challenging. Bowers (1984) states, “individuals have a degree of ego-investment in maintaining those definitions and assumptions upon which their self-concept is based” (42). The process of socialization helps the individual to conceptualize their identity in the social world. For example, in American society students learn, not through direct

experience, but within the symbolic and abstract *representations* of it, that they are living in a fair, neutral, and “democratic” society. Thus, when members of the majority culture succeed within it, they have been taught and assume that their success is earned through hard work or personal merit, as issues of advantage, discrimination, and oppression are audibly silent in the acquisition of symbolic knowledge as fact. In this instance, “criticizing” the dominant culture’s notion of “democracy” entails acknowledging what McIntosh calls the “myth of meritocracy” and reconciling the individual’s personal ego with the fact that opportunities exist for some people through no virtues of their own.

McIntosh carried her invisible knapsack and benefited from its contents without awareness, by virtue of her cultural status. In this sense she, like other members of the majority culture of power similarly equipped, blindly maintained her cultural status while members of minority cultures operated at a disadvantage without the same cultural assets. Here, we must ask whether education has a moral and democratic responsibility to acknowledge that the majority culture is institutionally “privileged” and “advantaged.” This advantage serves, not only to support these individuals’ ignorance of their privileged existence, but also inhibits their ability to renegotiate how the existence and institutionalization of their own “norm”--al ways of living are discriminating and oppressive to others, and, as a matter of fact, to themselves. How is it then, a “privilege” to be kept ignorant and manipulated, thus prevented from affecting socialization processes which maintain social stratification?

Conditions of Oppression

It is not a “privilege.” I would like to be so bold as to call it oppressive. Here, I introduce to the theoretical framework of this research, the work of Paulo Freire. Though his theories are derived from his experiences associated with more explicitly identifiable politically repressive regimes, the language he uses to expose conditions of oppression is significant in attempting to foster an understanding of the oppressive nature of American institutionalized education. Freire’s language is extreme; the images he presents dramatic. Some may even consider Freirian notions shocking when compared to a system traditionally upheld as “democratic.” I believe however, that an understanding of the ideologies he explores introduces us to a newer and more appropriate language with which to consider the possibility that socialization processes have the potential to oppress the development of critical consciousness in members of both the dominant and minority cultures in American society.

Returning to a previous example, McIntosh was socialized into her social status without awareness of how her “knowledge” had been socially constructed. The pattern of assumptions, passed on to her, inhibited her from seeing how her privileged life functioned in relationship to others not similarly advantaged. This lack of critical awareness and reflection of her own developing life attitudes contributed to the process by which she was “conditioned into oblivion” about her participation in an unjust social system. McIntosh was submerged in the reality created for her, specifically socialized to act as a member of the dominant and dominating culture. Submerged in it, she became the victim of a system operating to oppress her consciousness. Here we may see how

socialization may function to suppress the potential revolutionary outcomes of critical consciousness. In doing so, it protects the interests of those who wish to maintain the status quo which supports a political, social, economic, and cultural position of power and authority.

Socialization processes impede individuals from understanding the sociology and cultural imbeddedness of “knowledge” (which has been internalized as representative of the “truths” by which we live). This inhibits individuals from developing critical consciousness of their own state of oppression. Freire (1970) notes that, in a relationship of oppression, the oppressed are impaired from recognizing themselves as oppressed, precisely because they have internalized and are submerged within the “reality” constructed for them. In light of Bower’s description of the tacit nature by which socialization processes occur, Freire’s words ring true. Freire explains, “the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they [are] shaped” (27). If individuals are cognitively impaired from critically evaluating how their understandings of “reality” are dictated by traditional attitudes and assumptions regarding the experience of living, they become oppressed by those limited, objectified and abstract patterns for organizing thought. Individuals become objects in an oppressive state, receiving and storing in a packaged form conceptual guidelines for how experience is to be interpreted. Thus, McIntosh (1989) internalized the “myth of meritocracy” she was socialized to accept, viewing her “advantage” as earned by right of effort as opposed to the logical outcomes of operating from a “privileged”

position. In this reality, her capabilities to critically evaluate the ramifications of her social status were limited by a lack of consciousness as to an “other” reality.

As we continue to communicate through generations these limited interpretations of “reality” through socialization processes, we become the hosts, the heirs of an oppressive “knowledge.” In this light, Freire (Freire 1970) claims our “dualistic” identities simultaneously house or represent our own subjective experiences and the “knowledge” of cultural authority we have been manipulated to internalize; in essence, it replaces our own. We become “contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression” (34). Operating within such processes and thereby “hosting” the knowledge of cultural authority, we are not only oppressed by it, but also representative of it. We become the oppressor as our processes for socializing others are funded by the very knowledge that oppresses us. Here we must understand that attempting to separate the oppressor from the oppressed into fixed identities or into dichotomous conditions may inhibit us from recognizing and evaluating our own cultural imbeddedness; Understanding the nature of socialization may help us understand our own oppressed condition as victims of traditional cultural authority, as well as fund the realization that we are active in upholding and maintaining that authority and in doing so, contribute to the oppression of others. Without such a recognition, Freire confirms, we are “domesticated” by a lack of critical consciousness as to the social construction of our understandings (33).

Banking Education and Antidialogic Action

Freire explains that “banking education” represents the ideological educational strategies of an oppressive society (Freire, 1970). Such a model of education exemplifies

how a system functions, through what Freire calls, “antidialogic action,” to institutionally inhibit critical thought. Vital to the success of “banking education” is the presupposition of two primary relationships of power. The first involves the relational structure of the educational experience within which the teacher acts as the depositor of information and the students’ mind functions as the bank account to receive it. Here, the authority of the teacher is qualified as powerful and all-knowing, while the students are disempowered, subjugated to know nothing. This power relationship is assumed and must be socially sanctioned so that the method of transferring “knowledge” from one to the other is culturally accepted and taken-for-granted as necessary and appropriate. In other words, students’ minds must be considered as “empty” so that they are needing and ready to be “filled” with the contents of the deposits. The second relationship of power concerns the determination of the content of these deposits. The teacher, the “expert” in the transaction, directly “fills” the bank accounts with funds drawn from the “central bank of knowledge.” Ira Shor (Shor 1992) identifies the “central bank” in any society as “a metaphoric repository of official knowledge.” He posits,

As a store of cultural capital, the central bank is comprised of the standard syllabus in schools and colleges; traditional canons in academic disciplines; established scientific and technical knowledge; “correct usage” considered to be standard for writing and speaking; and works of art canonized as models of aesthetic excellence. It is material selected by those with the power to set standards (32).

I recall Delpit’s discussion of “cultural capital” here to emphasize Shor’s consideration of the power associated with what constitutes the “central bank.” The “knowledge” transmitted in this process as representative of the norms, conditions and expectations of

what is assumed to be the “common culture,” is in actuality funded and limited by the culture with power and authority to determine its contents.

This predetermined package of “knowledge” is delivered in finite form, without value or consideration for what the subjective and dynamic world of the student may offer the exchange. The role of the student is to memorize, file and store the deposits. The purpose here is “to attempt to destroy in the oppressed their quality as considerers of the world” (Freire 1970, 120). If they “consider” the content of the deposits, that content may become problematic in relationship to students’ subjective understandings and internalizations of their own experiences. Therefore, the student, as “object,” must be passive, complacent and educated to accept, rather than consider or evaluate, what is offered. Here, Freire explains how the life, culture, and world of the student is “culturally invaded.” The student becomes a victim of “conquest,” “colonized” by the greater authority of the “knowledge.” This knowledge replaces the student’s reality. As the praxis of domination, the prior and growing understandings of the student must then be continually manipulated to accommodate the claims of this “foreign body.”

The process of manipulation active in antidialogic action functions to systematically infuse myths fabricated to uphold and sanction the truth claims of the oppressor’s “knowledge” into the individual’s understandings. These “myths” exist to suppress doubt as to the validity of that knowledge and insure that its interpretation of experience will be internalized with appropriate meanings attached. Freire appropriately identifies these myths as “propaganda,” created as a tool of the oppressor to support political and social objectives. The role here, of the education process itself, as Freire

describes, is “to regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the student” (Freire 1970, 57). We can see this in education today as curriculum continues to reflect and promote in students’ understandings, a vision of social reality that often contradicts or ignores their actual experiences in *those* representations of *this* “common” reality. Instead, these suppressed and marginalized experiences remain audibly silent amidst a larger, more dominating and mythic narrative.

Freire’s description of “Divide and Rule,” a strategy of antialogic action operant in oppressive conditions, explains how oppressed individuals are strategically kept isolated from collectively identifying the legitimacy of their narratives. He explains that, to remain in power, the oppressor must weaken the oppressed by creating and deepening drifts among them. The oppressor is aware that any organized union of thought creates the potential for a liberation of consciousness. In banking education therefore, it is necessary to manipulate and confuse teachers and students alike, destroying the potential for any collective understanding or awareness of the cultural and social construction of their “knowledge” and that which funds their curriculum. As teachers are bombarded with and influenced by sanctioned textbooks, approved curriculum, State Frameworks and National Standards, the purposes of their work is dictated to them from outside their lifeworld in the classroom, in the abstract authority of “the invader society.” In this sense, the potential for critical analysis of what and how they are to teach is squashed beneath the more dominating and even threatening objectives of the “State” or administration. Who their students really are and what happens in their classroom becomes separated from, and secondary to, these authorized objectives.

Bowers (1984) states,

Most teachers today, trained to think of themselves as neutral public servants seeking the best technological solutions rather than as educators concerned with the truth claims of what they are asked to teach, lack the conceptual tools for demystifying the dominant view that maintains that knowledge is socially neutral (68).

Bowers points to the fact that teachers are “trained” to accept as their responsibility the communication of information, training that socializes them to accept and accommodate the truth claims of the knowledge they are to transmit. In this sense teachers are oppressed by the abstract nature of official knowledge as are their students. A lack of an understanding of the sociology and political imbeddedness of this official knowledge isolates them and their students from critical interaction with the “knowledge” from which they teach. It is an institutionalized ripple effect.

In that teachers may have the opportunity to recognize their roles as unconscious carriers or gatekeepers of a cultural system that leads students into passively accepting the social realities defined for them by others, they may see how they can contribute to liberating their students and themselves from being bound to the world of taken-for-granted belief where behavior, action, and as Delpit (1988), McIntosh (1989), and Shor (1992) reveal, opportunities for success are culturally dictated. Prior to the relativizing process of traditional forms of authority, communication performs the conservative function of maintaining traditional ways; banking education functions to promote this objective. Bowers suggests, “as tradition is disrupted, the political role of communication changes; the liminality of the social situation provides the potential for a transition to new ways of thinking” (Bowers 1984, 7). As teachers and students, collectively oppressed by

the authority of culture to determine “knowledge,” develop an understanding of how and why “knowledge” is constructed, they may together become active as “considerers” in negotiating and constructing their own meanings and interpretations of experience in a world that belongs to them.

The development of such critical thinking may liberate both teachers and students from the world of taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions, and can be exemplified in the growth of “communicative competence.” Its development may assist teachers in affecting both the process and outcome of cultural socialization. Freire (1970) reveals however, “the urban oppressed live in an expanding context in which the oppressive command center is plural and complex” (156). Teachers have the potential to counter socialization processes that may bind their students to limited interpretations of reality. This potential is threatened by the teachers themselves who are oppressed by the same actions and conditions of an oppressive society that functions to oppress their students.

CHAPTER THREE

FUNDING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH DIALOGUE:

COUNTERING ANTIDIALOGIC ACTION

I suggest that students must be *taught* the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful, communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own "expertness" as well: and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and about the power relationships they represent.

(Delpit, 1988, 290)

Dialogue is concerned not simply with providing new information but with fostering an explicit understanding of how knowledge is made; it seeks to develop an independent and autonomous learner.

(Burbules 1993, 10)

When we say that a regime of power imposes certain "hegemonic" understandings on persons, when we criticize the "ideological" character of certain aspects of the curriculum, or when we condemn the tendency of certain groups (or persons) to "silence" the voices of others, it is important to acknowledge that these can be judged only against the background of an implicit set of beliefs about how communication *should* proceed.

(Burbules 1993, 78)

When people are already dehumanized, due to the oppression they suffer, the process of their liberation must not employ the methods of dehumanization.

(Freire 1970, 49)

The purpose for the discussion of dialogue in the scope of this research is to put forth what may be considered an ideal structure in the classroom for the kind of

“meaningful communicative endeavors” Delpit (1988) calls for. It is also presented as the cornerstone of Freire’s “theory of dialogic action,” the antithesis of antidialogic action described in Chapter Two. The nature of “dialogue” Burbules tends to in his work, Dialogue and Teaching: Theory and Practice (1993) speaks to the issue of power associated with *potential* understandings of the construction of knowledge which funds the concerns of this research. The use of specific conceptualizations of dialogue is regarded in the following review as a potential educational strategy, a praxis that may assist teachers in confronting conditions of oppression active in the classroom reflecting the canonization of limited representations of a “reality” imbedded in the cultural knowledge that governs curriculum. Freire’s “dialogic action” contributes to the establishment of a classroom environment which supports communication that explicitly fosters inclusive, egalitarian and thus, shared meaning-making among both students and teacher in the interest of developing what could be referred to as “communicative competence” discussed earlier. In this chapter, I will consider what Burbules identifies as the qualities of ideal forms of dialogue essential to productive and beneficial educational purposes. Burbules’ work will be supported by an overview of what Freire considers to be the key aspects of a liberating pedagogy that are dependent upon and fueled by dialogue.

Freire (1970) states, “dialogue is a moment where human beings meet to reflect on their reality as they make it and remake it” (32). The terms “meet,” “reflect” and “make” are significant terms in the discussion of successful dialogue in differentiation of it as critical from other forms of communication (Freire 1970). “Dialogue,” as it is framed

by Burbules (1993) is an communicative event *between* individuals, where participants ideally come together in the *mutual* pursuit of understanding, where meanings are jointly created. The atmosphere is characterized by a relativism of authority in which each is considered to have expertise in both knowledge and experience to offer the exchange. Individuals “meet” in the formation of a relationship, if only temporarily, to put forth ideas and understandings for one another’s consideration. The notion of “reflection” suggests that individuals in dialogue are interested and open to accommodating new and potentially different understandings into previously established conceptualizations of reality.

Burbules (1993) describes this open-ness as “recognizing we stand to learn from and with one another” (38). The structural organization characteristic of dialogue is a kind of give and take, a “to and fro,” where participants respond to one another in the process of reflecting upon what has been put forth by the other and within the life of the dialogue itself (Gadamer in Burbules 1993, xiii). The “making” or “remaking” of something suggests that it is constructed anew; it’s final outcome cannot predetermined nor defined but rather is created within a process. As individuals enter into a dialogic relation, they become involved in a process of “making” meaning; each may bring pieces and parts to the construction site, but what evolves is understanding which is discovered and bred *within* the communicative interchange itself. Thus, new meanings are “made” while prior understandings of what was once considered “to be,” or in our interests, the content of traditional and culturally authorized “knowledge,” may be remade. In this light, dialogue supports a constructivist view of knowledge in which individuals have the opportunity to articulate and comprehend current understandings as the material to fund dialogue move

within a liminal space where newer understandings have yet to be determined, and have the potential to reach a place where the union between prior and newfound understandings translate into meaning.

Freire (1970) explains how “cooperation” is an integral and necessary element of dialogic action. What has been described as attitudes of “mutuality,” acts of “accommodation” and incidences of “exchange” in the previous paragraph demonstrates how participants in dialogue together are involved in what Freire calls, cooperation in a “co-intentional” educational experience. In it, the traditionally authorized teacher/student relationship, functioning in oppressive systems of education, changes as both partners in dialogue act as “subjects” and their personal and subjective “knowledge” fund the communication they *intend* towards. Here, individuals act upon the world as opposed to being victimized in it. Liberation from oppressive conditions requires what Freire refers to as a sustained “communion” among individuals, which in turn elicits their cooperation with one another. Burbules (1993) indirectly speaks to this notion of “communion” in his analysis of the “spirit of dialogue” (19).

Dialogue, its spirit of mutuality and the cooperative pursuit of intersubjective understanding, is completely dependent upon how it is approached and regarded by its participants. Burbules (1993) states,

What underlies and shapes the patterns of interaction in a dialogue are the attitudes, emotions, and expectations that participants have regarding each other and the value of the dialogue itself (15).

It is impossible to identify what an individual’s attitudes, beliefs, and expectations may be upon entering a dialogue, but Burbules reviews what may be considered ideal qualities and

states of being which may contribute to creating successful dialogue. What he reveals is that, although dialogue is a process that cannot be defined and limited by a specific structure or method, dialogue does require certain commitments of participants to insure the life and quality of it. Notions such as concern, trust, respect, appreciation, and even affection and feelings of hope are necessary to foster an ability to feel safe in disclosing our thoughts and beliefs in an atmosphere where diversity and difference are valued in the interest of working towards shared understanding; that individual's attitudes and behavior reflect an awareness within the life of the conversation itself. As Burbules (1993) explains, "more is at stake than simply the topic at hand" (36). In other words, the life of the dialogue itself relies upon the commitment of its participants to uphold certain "communicative virtues" which support the process itself beyond merely the communication of the ideas which fund it.

Burbules' (1993) account of these "communicative virtues" deserves extended review for without them, the inclusive, intersubjective meaning-making process successful dialogue may offer will have a more difficult time being recognized, if at all. It is worth noting here that what often impedes communication among individuals is resistance to difference in either an unwillingness or inability to regard the voices of others as valid or valuable. In these instances, individuals fail even to "meet" one another. But, as Burbules (1993) explains,

The dialogic relation does not require identity among its participants; nor does it seek to create this. Dialogue does not assume up front that people are the same, speak the same, or are interested in the same issues. It only assumes that people are committed to the process of communication directed towards interpersonal understanding and that they hold, or are willing to develop, some degree of concern for, interest in, and respect for one another (25).

Thus, what dialogue may offer requires, not an abandonment of beliefs and identity, but certain *attitudinal* and *behavioral* qualities of being which will sustain differences within what Burbules (1993) describes as “a broader compact of toleration and respect” (29). In fact, he goes on to note that,

It is also true that the spirit of [dialogue], and the quality of the relation that underlies it, can transform our perception of disagreement or difference, to see them less as threats and more as opportunities (63).

“Opportunities” to regard differences as fuel for thought but more critically, opportunities to include and observe diverse human accounts of experience that are missing from culturally limited and conceptualized visions of a reality traditionally defined by the voices of the majority culture.

It is necessary here to offer Freire’s consideration of “Unity for Liberation” as another component of his theory of dialogic action. As explained earlier, oppressive conditions utilize manipulative strategies to divide and isolate individuals from one another in the attempt to stifle their potential unification of thought. Integral to liberation from historical and institutionalized is the agreement among oppressed individuals to confront and problematize the reality that sustains their domination or, in other words, a willingness to “come to the table.” As the needs and interests of subcultures in American society differ in regards to their unique experiences in an oppressive social system, total liberation for all requires their unity of *purpose*, that of liberation. As Freire (1970) notes, “the liberation of the oppressed involves solidarity among them” which reflects Burbules’ notion of the “broader compact” (155). This presents a challenge for the oppressed in

American society, as the “myths” that have been fabricated to divide them are deeply ingrained in their consciousness and are successful in promoting their disassociation.

Burbules is careful in recognizing that the purpose of dialogue is not to force agreement and consensus among individuals, as if goodwill and good intentions will inevitably eliminate tension which may have brought individuals to dialogue in the first place. He states, “attempts to force agreements or consensus in such circumstances often simply result in submerging alternative views beneath a dominant one” (62). In fact, individuals may be wary of engaging in dialogue precisely for fear that their concerns may be blurred and potentially lost within the impression of mutuality dialogue may suggest by its participatory nature. Freire (1970) explains,

The object of dialogical-libertarian action is not to “dislodge” the oppressed from a mythological reality in order to “bind” them to another reality. On the contrary, the object of dialogical action is to make it possible for the oppressed, by perceiving their adhesion, to opt to transform an unjust reality (155).

Dialogue does not guarantee resolve, nor does it seek to invalidate the importance of exposing conflicting social interests. On the contrary, dialogue only offers itself as a possible common *medium* through which disassociated individuals might successfully communicate to unveil their realities, and in doing so, generate mutual understanding. What evolves can be considered what Freire calls a “cultural synthesis--” a unification of individual’s interpretations of reality that, observed in totality, serves as more inclusive vision of the complexity of human experiences in social society. He explains,

In cultural synthesis- and only in cultural synthesis- is it possible to resolve the contradiction between the worldview of the leaders and that of the people, to the enrichment of both. Cultural synthesis does not deny the differences between the two views; indeed, it is based on these differences.

It *does* deny the invasion of one by the other, but affirms the undeniable support each gives to the other (162).

The “support” Freire describes is the nature by which co-existence and authority of multiple worldviews may function to replace limited and oppressed notions of a “common” reality.

Burbules (1993) identifies the “behavior and attitudinal qualities of being,” what he considers to be “communicative virtues,” as “tolerance,” “patience,” and “an openness to give and receive criticism” (42). To these he adds others such as the ability to listen thoughtfully and attentively, a desire to communicate in a way comprehensible to others, and “a willingness to become less dogmatic about the belief that the way the world appears to us is necessarily the way the world is” (42). What he describes as virtues are in fact, necessary human qualities of character which insure that individuals will have the opportunity within a dialogic encounter to “hear” what a partner has to offer. A commitment to exhibit both tolerance and patience are required to sustain involvement. As described by Burbules (1993), “the unfolding of ideas and understandings takes time” (37). This tolerance is also one in support of an awareness that the experiences and knowledge of another represent a personal expertise, and therefore valid in its own rights. In this sense, individuals choose to truly meet, accept, and even appreciate one another for the unique and individual perspective they offer the encounter. As Burbules notes, “in dialogue we endeavor to be fully *with* our partner” (36). A toleration is required that one listens “attentively and thoughtfully,” but also tolerates a willingness to suspend, if only temporarily, beliefs and assumptions which may interfere with in fact hearing and digesting, reflecting on what a partner shares. An openness to “give and receive criticism”

allows for the interaction between partners ideas as each feeds off of, challenges, and interprets the other's understandings. Such a developing relationship between understandings necessarily must be recognized as "play" between ideas as it fuels the "making" and "remaking" process of each individual's prior and growing understandings.

Dialogue as "play" is the metaphor Burbules (1993), building on Gadamer, explores in great length in the effort to describe the nature of a dialogic event as a phenomena that can be creative, spontaneous, and enjoyable as well as an experience that can encourage the development of certain skills. These skills, learned and exhibited by both teacher and students reflect and in a sense are shaped by the "communicative virtues." Discussing the common notion that children need to "learn how to play with others" (58). Burbules further explains that what we really mean tends more to the development of the communicative skills which foster successful play such as, "a general attitude of playfulness, a tolerance for disagreement, a willingness to compromise, an ability to cooperate" (59). This "learned" behavior is of primary concern to the critical assumption of this research which argues that only the development and practice of such "skills" and "virtues" can offer forms of communication in the classroom which support a relativism of authority and fund an understanding that *any* knowledge is socially constructed. This in turn, will offer students opportunities to critically deconstruct and conceptually remake culturally communicated (through socialization processes) norms which foster attitudes and assumptions contrary to democratically supported values and practices. Burbules (1993) posits,

The topic of virtues draws us into a much broader consideration of the kind of society we live in, and the kind of society we desire. Emphasizing the primacy of the dialogic relation, and situating that relation in the web of

social relations in which we feel, perceive, and act towards one another, forces us to consider the pedagogical problems of fostering dialogue as a social and political problem, challenging the institutional and ideological contexts that impede dialogue, and changing them, or at least creating sustainable alternatives to them (45).

Learning to “dialogue,” happens only in the process of the event itself. Burbules (1993) explains,

We develop our capacities for creating and maintaining such a relation only by being in it... We teach our partners, they teach us, we teach ourselves in the context of sustaining and developing the dialogical relations we actually have. We improve by imitating, practicing, and experimenting in the midst of real-time activities (49).

As the teacher maintains the traditional role of organizing and instructing curricular content and contexts, she is in many ways responsible for impeding or encouraging opportunities for dialogue. Whether or not a teacher values dialogue has much to do with her beliefs and attitudes, understandings regarding the role of the teacher and the purposes of education, which are the primary questions this research asks. The “moves” (Burbules 1993) the teacher makes, including how language is used in terms of the explicit nature of its codes within potential dialogical moments and, an understanding of the social construction of knowledge, determines the degree to which “communicative competence” can developed in the student. This research suggests dialogue as a priority in educational pedagogy will, by its capacity to relativize authority, support the subjective experience of the individual and foster communication that is both reflective and transformative, bring into being what Bowers calls, “the democratization and humanization of power in the classroom,” thus allowing students to create and generate their own meanings and visions (1984, 102).

In conclusion, the bonus in learning how to dialogue and in using dialogue tends to two fundamental concerns: First, dialogue supports the socialization of more humane, egalitarian, and just norms as students develop and practice “communicative virtues” with one another. Second, the process of dialogue itself encourages meaning-making events where students have the cognitive capacities to critique the imbedded assumptions which underlie the conceptual maps upon which current norms are established and maintained.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meanings of lived experience.

(Max van Manen 1990, 10)

What the ethnographer is faced with is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then render...Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript-foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound, but in transient examples of shaped behavior.

(Clifford Geertz 1973, 10)

A Critical Qualitative Approach

In the effort to illuminate the imbedded phenomena that is our learned behaviors and attitudes, I searched for a research method that allowed me access into frames of consciousness that are often unrecognized, and therefore potentially unnamed. In the attempt to understand cognitive processes that are multi-layered, abstract, and often contradictory, I engage in research strategies that will respect this complexity. Because I seek to comprehend and analyze the effects of socialization that I myself have internalized, my research method must serve the function of promoting an on-going and recursive reflection of my own insights and assumptions in order to help contribute to the making of meaning that might otherwise remain hidden. To do this, I commit myself to

observation and inquiry that can only be conducted through the subjective experience of becoming involved in the phenomenon; that is, as I “study” the phenomenon of the socialization of power and identity, I enter into the “research” as an active participant and thus, add to the research data which represents my explicit role in co-constructing meaning. As a result, my interpretations are necessarily filtered through the lens of my own historical and cultural imbeddedness.

Qualitative research operates within a constructivist, interpretivist paradigm which supports the view that conceptualizations of reality are socially constructed, contextual and thus, complex. Glesne and Peshkin state, “our preferred research methods reflect personal choices; they are however, embedded in our social and historical contexts” (1992, 8). Rooted in an historical era informed by post-modern perspectives, my personal belief respects the consideration that meanings and truths are derived from negotiated and shared understandings among individuals through the medium of communication; that no one opinion, perspective, or school of thought has the authority to determine or summarize what each of us individually experience. I am drawn thus towards a research methodology which takes into account with integrity, 1) the individual, and therefore subjective point of view, interpretation, and affect of experience, 2) the assumption that understanding is communicated and socially constituted through language as a medium and thus, language is inherent with individual and collective consciousness, and 3) that only within the inclusive interaction between individual understandings through dialogue, can we speak with authority about the phenomena of human experience.

Qualitative research addresses the tendency of traditional forms of research methods to impose meaning on experience without inhabiting it sufficiently, comprehensively. Qualitative research, by the nature of its holistic approach to data collection and analysis, allows the researcher to access the complexity of subjective and intersubjective experience as it is situated in the everyday lifeworld of its participants and situates the researcher there. Keiffer (1981) utilizes forms of qualitative research in his study of citizen empowerment to address the “conceptually pluralistic” nature of the phenomena of human experience. In his recognition of the individual as “a changing being acting and interacting in a changing world” (9), his approach to research consciously serves as a model for empowerment, encouraging his participants to actively take part and share control in the generation of knowledge the research will promote. Keiffer’s use of dialogue and an accompanying research diary are instruments which support both the ethical and theoretical foundations of his research. My own work will draw on these strategies in tending to the underlying assumptions of this research which view knowledge and understanding as socially constructed. As well, the methods of this research have been chosen with the intention to promote equity of power in the generation of both data and analysis in the effort to support the notion of justice the research seeks to consider.

Data Collection Methods

Observation/Field Journal

Through participant observation, you also seek to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange. The strange becomes familiar in the process of understanding it. To make the familiar strange is often more difficult because you must continually question your own assumptions and perceptions.

(Glesne & Peshkin 1992, 42)

The primary purpose of observation in research is to allow the researcher insight into the phenomena in question. But account of observation alone will fail to promote a measure of objective understanding. Our understandings of events are embedded with our own assumptions, expectations and values which inevitably shape what we think we “see.” A research diary or field journal assists the researcher in taking note of and situating personal bias in observation. As a tool for reflection, the journal helps to make the familiar strange by inciting the researcher to ask: Why have I seen this in this way or, how has my understanding of what I have seen been colored by my own previously held beliefs? These questions must be asked to insure that what is “observed” is understood for the subjective interpretation that it is; however, the recursive nature of journal writing, of thoughts upon reflection looping back on themselves, supports the researcher in re-evaluating and deconstructing hidden assumptions in what is “seen,” allowing for a more informed interpretation.

Conversational Interviews: A Dialogic Approach

Partners in a dialogue proceed interactively, cooperatively, not toward a specific common goal, but in a process of mutual engagement directed towards shared understanding.

(Burbules 1993, 115)

Insofar as the biases of prior assumption and the inclinations of emerging interpretation influence both data-gathering and analysis, the “cooperative dialogue” of investigator and interviewee insures more rigorous fidelity to the phenomena explored.

(Keiffer 1981, 13)

The use of conversational interviews in this research serves a variety of functions. Primarily, it is a strategy utilized to promote active involvement by the participants in constructing meaning in relationship to the issues in question. “Conversational” connotes

a specific form of involvement that encourages the fostering of a dynamic between researcher and interviewee; a communicative exchange where thoughts and understandings are put forth, questioned and possibly analyzed in the life of the conversation, and others that may follow. Dialogue takes a myriad of forms as Burbules (1993) explains, and it is “conversational dialogue” we engage in “when we are primarily interested in understanding the outlook and experiences of a partner in dialogue” (112). This research is predicated on the notion that understandings and experiences of an individual can only be interpreted in conjunction with that individual; the analytical outcomes of a research that discludes the language, and thus the voice of its participants promotes an inequity of power between the researcher and the participants of the research which inevitably taints the data and any analysis of it. Conversational interviews is an ideal method of data collection capable of bringing forth and preserving what understandings the participants have to offer the research.

Burbules (1993) details in great length the roles attitudes, beliefs, and feelings play in what he calls the “spirit” of dialogue. What is most important to note here is that, in the identification of “conversational” as the descriptive term for the dialogues in this research, the intention is for the interviews to support an environment where, 1) the participant will feel safe and respected in the sharing of her experiences and points of view, and 2) both the researcher and participant will be encouraged to question and interpret each other’s understandings in an on-going and reflexive nature, thereby benefiting each other in communicating deeper understanding. Not only does the researcher gain in a more informed and authentic understanding of the participant, but hopefully the participant gains

in a deeper understanding of her own perspectives in the process of communicating them. To serve this intention, interviews will be electronically recorded and transcribed for the interviewee's review. Subsequent interviews will then address the language of previous communication to clarify and/or expand on earlier understandings. As Keiffer (1981) explains, "in allowing participants to reflect on and respond to full, unedited transcripts of their own interviews, the dialogue method fosters more accurate retrospection and self-validation of emergent interpretation." In this light, the effort to create a participatory research is nurtured (14).

Documents/Artifacts

Language is embedded with individual and collective attitudes and beliefs towards life experiences. Attitudes and beliefs are communicated through language in various styles. The language of institutionalized education in the school setting takes the form of curriculum primarily, but also may be communicated through informal medium such as memos, bulletins, staff and student newsletters, and meeting minutes. Towards accessing more comprehensively the perspectives and understandings of educators, it is necessary to collect and analyze documentation that may speak to the questions of this research. Therefore, historical and current representations of communication in the site context of the research will be utilized as data to fund greater understanding of the phenomena in review.

Research Questions

1. What do educators believe are the purposes of education?
2. What do educators understand as constituent to "knowledge?"

3. How do educators understand their role in communicating forms of “knowledge?”

Data Collection/Analysis

Data was collected on a formal and informal basis beginning June 1998 through April 1999. I as researcher was active as a student-teacher in the 4th/5th multiage co-op classroom. From August through December, research was conducted primarily in the form of observation. A journal was kept noting my thoughts and reflections regarding routine events in the research context and the growth and development of personal understandings of the nature of power implicit in the educational setting and the socialization processes occurring. Throughout the year, both formal and informal (shoptalk) interviews were conducted with research participants in the effort to shed light on educators understandings of the purposes of education and their involvement in promoting those purposes. Documents of diverse forms were collected which appeared to speak to the concerns of this research; letters and memos between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and written communication between staff were analyzed as well as formal curriculum, posters, bumper stickers, and illustrations utilized by staff members to communicate messages to students. As language embodies conscious and taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions, language as the primary medium for the communication in this setting has been deconstructed to analyze the relationship between the implicit purposes of the communication and the possibility of the inherent meanings understood.

Research Site and Context

Live Oak School District...Where the pursuit of excellence is achieved
through a caring partnership with students, parents, community, and staff.
(LOSD 1996-1997)

Research was conducted at Live Oak Elementary School in Santa Cruz, California. Live Oak Elementary is one of four schools which comprise the Live Oak School District . The district is located adjacent to the city of Santa Cruz, in an unincorporated area of Santa Cruz county. Live Oak Elementary accommodates approximately 500 of the district's 2,200 students in kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. The most current report of the demographics of the students of Live Oak Elementary (1996-97) shows 61.1% White, 29.94% Hispanic, 5.58% African-American, 2.17% Asian, 1.08% Filipino, .05% American Indian, and .04% Pacific Islander.

In gathering information regarding the earlier years of the Live Oak area, the superintendent proudly shared a document written on the occasion of the 1990 school reunion (Reader, 1990). The document underscores the high value placed on community at Live Oak. Beginning with a description of the Ohlone Indians who were the first to inhabit the land of the "Great Live Oaks" stalking game across the grasslands, fishing the Pacific Ocean, and trapping water fowl from the salt water marshes, the first one hundred years of Live Oak's history is reconstructed. In 1769, explorers, priests, and soldiers from Spain came through the Soquel Creek through the San Lorenzo river to "discover" the pasture lands they would eventually populate. With the founding of the Mission Santa Cruz west of the San Lorenzo River, old Indian way of life gave way to the era of Spanish California. The vaqueros or, new "Californios," were soon joined by white trappers and foreign sailors jumping ship at Monterey looking for a place to settle. They became citizens of Mexico, were granted land to put down roots, and assimilated into the Californios way of life.

But the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill brought white men into California in the 1840's who were not interested in the old ways of the ranchos. Unable to understand the "Americanos" and untutored in their styles of business and land values, the Spanish Californios quickly lost control of their land. The new owners of Live Oak were immigrants from Germany, Ireland, England, and Portugal who had, like many settlers, came to the area with high hopes for the future. They were primarily farmers who were blessed by the richness of local soil and climate, successfully harvesting grain, wheat, oats, and barley. These prosperous farmers immediately rallied to establish themselves as a community. They became leading citizens in Santa Cruz County politics. The district of schools and "Live Oak School" as its first, was founded in 1872 when Irish immigrant and local settler Martin Kinsley rode from farm to farm persuading neighbors to support the establishment of a formal schoolhouse in the area. Live Oak School, as it was first named, was built in 1873, and the 20 by 46 wood frame building stocked with rows of benches to support twenty-five students opened in July with a total student enrollment of seven children. These seven "children" ranged in age from six to twenty-four years. At this time, none of the remaining local Spanish Californios sent their children to Live Oak School. The document is silent as to why.

The small schoolhouse became a community center where neighbors congregated for social and political engagements. The existence of the school played an integral part in the unification of the rapidly emerging community of Live Oak. Over the years, industry in the Live Oak area grew beyond agriculture to include commercial marketing of poultry and bulbs. New homes sprung up, roads were cut, and bridges were built across streams

and gulches. Natural gas lines and water towers were placed. As more and more settlers moved to Live Oak, the one-room schoolhouse grew overcrowded and in need of repair. Community members were divided on the issue of school growth and how funds were to be raised to support renovation. Older citizens, many Civil War veterans, were opposed to the raising of taxes to assist education. In the meantime, as politics stunted progressive reform, the one-room schoolhouse was partitioned into two sections, and tents were erected to accommodate the growing student body. Under such conditions, the quality of education suffered. As district boundary lines were redrawn, Live Oak school picked up more students than it could hold, and families who could afford to, left the area in search of better educational provisions for their children.

The pilot interview for this research provided the information regarding the recent history of Live Oak School, as the document provided by the superintendent only recounts the first one hundred years. Katie Foler, the school's librarian of the past fifteen years describes how the area changed. When she joined the staff, Live Oak Elementary served students K-2 only. As the Live Oak area expanded, primarily through the county's designation of it as a location for low-income housing, the school grew to include third through fifth grades. As members of the district had the intention for it to remain small and funding was limited, Del Mar Elementary became the local middle school and Live Oak assumed the extra elementary students. According to Katie, the tension in such overcrowded conditions made teaching and learning difficult for both students and staff. Later, a new middle school was built and Del Mar was reinstated as an elementary school

once again. This, in combination with class reduction size, reduced the numbers at Live Oak to a manageable size.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the California State Board of Education for school improvement and restructuring, "It's Elementary" (1998) is the chosen name for a current program at Live Oak Elementary which resulted from the efforts of a group of district parents who were interested in discovering how they might effectively assist in expanding some of the current educational options for their children. They made a proposal which was accepted by site and district administrators to create two classrooms at Live Oak that would be considered "Parent Co-op Classrooms." The basic principles of the program, according to its most recent publication for new parents in the district include:

- Home-school connection facilitating communication and *parent involvement*
- *Multi-age classrooms*, partnerships and groupwork
- *Integrated thematic curriculum* with an experiential, hands-on emphasis
- *Innovative, instructional strategies*- Brain-based, developmental, constructivist
- *Respectful, safe, and secure* classroom management and climate

(emphasis added) (Spafford, 1998)

The document states,

The hallmark of the Parent Co-op program is a strong commitment to collaboration and shared-decision making among parents, teachers, and administrators (1).

The two co-op classrooms are divided into the primary (1-3) and intermediate program (4-5). This research will take place in the fourth-fifth Parent Co-op classroom throughout

the 1998-99 school year. This classroom site was chosen because its declared commitment to collaborative and shared decision-making represented a viable model for the research of power and socialization processes in educational settings.

Within this context, a high level of familial participation and involvement in the community environment of the school is recognizable on a daily basis. As early as an hour before school officially begins at 8:30 a.m. each morning, students can be seen with members of their families walking through the hallways, socializing in the classrooms and out on the playground. During the regular Monday morning assemblies, which take place on the playground from 8:30-9:00 a.m., many families remain on campus and gather near to listen, a noticeable presence in the congregational atmosphere. The students assemble in their formal lines organized by classroom. Younger children sit in strollers near parents and caregivers, while grandparents lean on canes or hold the elbow of a relative. Other days, after the first bell rings, caregivers slowly leave campus while some remain in the classrooms to provide extra help to the teachers. Families gather once again as early as a half-hour before dismissal. As activities inside the classroom are coming to a close, the sounds of conversations just outside the doors signal the day's end. The school's playground slides and climbing structures are filled throughout the day with the siblings and relatives of students.

Research Participants

The primary participants in this research include the teachers and staff members of Live Oak Elementary School. The names of the research participants have been changed to protect their identities.

Helen Reynolds- fourth-fifth grade multi-age co-op classroom teacher

Helen Reynolds is the classroom teacher in the fourth-fifth grade multiage Co-op class which served as the primary context of this research. She has taught at Live Oak Elementary the entirety of her eight-year career and played an active role in the creation of the Parent Co-op program piloted and active in her classroom.

Katie Foler- school librarian

Katie Foler is the school librarian for Live Oak Elementary. She has been a resident of Santa Cruz County for twenty-six years and an employee at Live Oak for twenty-two years.

Debbie Walker- fifth grade classroom teacher

Debbie has been teaching fifth-grade at Live Oak Elementary for the three years of her teaching career. She is a graduate of the teacher credentialing program at UC Santa Cruz.

Rachel Sanders- third grade classroom teacher

Rachel has been teaching at Live Oak Elementary School for twenty-five years.

Sara Palmer- first-third grade multi-age co-op classroom teacher

Sara teaches in the primary component of the “It’s Elementary” program at Live Oak. She began teaching at Live Oak three years ago when the program began. Sara has spent her career creating and maintaining alternative forms of education.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COLONIZATION OF THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

The purposes of this research have been funded by an interest in whether or not teachers believe that education is a potential and appropriate medium to counter traditionally authorized patterns of thinking, cultural “norms” that are imbedded with biased and exclusive re-presentations of the experience of living as a fixed “reality.” This overriding question encompasses two primary and related issues: The first focuses on the process of socialization. I have argued that teachers are generally unaware of the ways in which they socialize their students to these particular assumptions about living due to the implicit, subconscious nature by which they themselves have been socialized. As they continue to act in this process, they become the socializing agents of their students. If norms are to be challenged, the ways in which they are communicated and maintained through socialization processes active in the classroom must first be recognized. To this end, the teachers’ acknowledgment of their participation in this process is crucial. The second concern regards what, in fact, teachers consider to be the purposes of education and their roles in tending to those purposes? Do those purposes have any relationship to what may translate into the development of students’ communicative competence with which they may critically evaluate what is taken-for-granted as “truth.” If so, teachers

may contribute to enabling their students' to reconstruct newer and more inclusive understandings of more complex and multiple realities, funded by their own subjective interpretations of the world which includes their own phenomenological experiences as valid sources. An understanding of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in reference to these concerns speaks to the initial question.

Socialization and the Power of the Teacher as "Role Model"

I have been surprised at the degree to which the research participants communicated not only their awareness of their power as socializing agents, but their acknowledgment and consideration of *what* they are communicating in the process. In fact, the teachers identified their power to socialize students as a primary motive in entering education. Without exception, the teachers explicitly confirmed that they purposefully utilized their power as "role models" to establish specific conditions for learning in their classrooms. As they reflected on their own imbedded assumptions about teaching and learning that they themselves have internalized in the process of their own socialization, they were critical as to the way in which their day-to-day moods, attitudes, and behavior affect and influence their students understandings of themselves, each other, and their perceptions of their relationship with and power to affect change in their world.

Debbie Walker identified the power to "set the tone" as one of her fundamental interests in becoming a teacher. In reflecting on her transition from classroom aide to teacher, she said, "What changed is that I was the one opening the door every morning." This notion of "opening the door" each morning is an appropriate metaphor for the sense of responsibility the teachers communicated in their power to determine and affect the

learning experiences that happen *inside* those doors each day. In describing their behavior and instructional methods as a “model” against which their students will evaluate and situate their understandings, the teachers expressed their awareness of their influential power to shape and texturize those understandings. Helen Reynolds explained this phenomenon:

I mean, you teach who you are. What you model for those kids everyday is you. And if what you model everyday is grumpy, disgruntled, not happy about being there, then that’s what you’re teaching them. That school is a place where you’re grumpy, disgruntled, and not happy about being there.

Helen reflects on the power of the individual personality to affect attitudes towards learning, but the teachers extended this notion of “modeling” deeper into the consideration of how, not only their attitudes, but the methods for teaching and the content of their curriculum act as a “model” from which students will construct their own value systems active in contexts outside the classroom. Helen went on:

And I think that you’re teaching them about your value system in the world. You’re teaching them about whether or not they should care about the world, whether they should care about other people. Your attitude and the way you talk teaches them a lot about racism and sexism, for example.

Sara Palmer shared an example of her awareness that her instructional methods model and value traditional systems of thought. Here, she shows how extrinsic motivation was functioning to overpower students’ value for their personal achievements:

Like, it never occurred to me before in the old days, when I used to give stickers, that if a kid didn’t get a sticker, they feel bad. I mean, I didn’t understand that. Or, I thought that that was OK. You get a perfect paper, you get a sticker. You miss one, you don’t. And I didn’t realize all of those things- Oh gosh, I’m creating perfectionists. Oh gosh, I’m creating people who think that they’re better than somebody else or worse than somebody else. I don’t teach with stickers anymore. I don’t teach with external rewards.

Rachel Sanders succinctly stated, "What the kids learn is what they see modeled." The teachers care for what they consciously or unconsciously "model" for their students was spoken of in relationship to the messages they felt they personally wanted or were responsible for communicating to their students, as they confirmed, "we teach by modeling." Again and again the teachers talked about modeling the behaviors and attitudes they wished to promote as valuable in their students understandings of themselves. A common expression that became almost a cliché used by the teachers was a practice they called, "walking your talk." Here they drew a connection between what teachers model, their "walk" in the classroom, and "their talk," what they communicate to be their professional intentions, values, and beliefs. It soon became clear that "walking your talk" was a question of accountability as a role model imbedded with the understanding that practice in the classroom will influence and socialize students and therefore, the walk had better match the talk. In discussing their own sense of accountability, the teachers revealed what they felt to be their responsibilities and purposes of their work in the classroom-- their "talk."

In our conversations about their understandings of their "role" in the classroom, I posed a few open-ended questions asking the teachers to consider the relationship between their own personal visions of what they felt their roles to be and what they believed they were hired to do, what may be considered the more traditional purposes of education functioning in the classroom. I was looking to address the issue of whether or not they considered education to be a place where students could be assisted in critically evaluating culturally sanctioned norms communicated to them through socialization

processes. All of the participants articulated that the primary intention in their teaching is for their students to be, as Sara put it, “intimately connected” to their learning. They talked about their value for creating learning atmospheres where students feel safe and qualified to question authority, to think for themselves, and where they have the opportunity to communicate and evaluate their understandings with one another. The teachers articulated a value for their students’ development of their own opinions and interpretations of experience, as they would ultimately connect their learning to their worlds outside the classroom walls. To these ends, the teachers described their strategies for eliciting and encouraging their students thinking-- their “walk.”

Debbie explained the design of her curriculum: “My intention is for it to be involved assignments. Not memorization or regurgitation, but what do you think about this?” The teachers were conscious of how their own traditionally authorized role as the authority or “expert” in the classroom might threaten their students’ self-expression. They purposefully avoided giving their students the message that, as one teacher put it, “you must learn this way of thinking.” Helen best articulated the teacher’s concern and in so doing, indirectly commented on the traditional authority designated to the teacher:

You set the tone. The tone for whether it’s safe or not to question anything. . . If the atmosphere, the climate is such that- sit down, shut up, do your work, don’t ask any questions, don’t mess with me, take the test and prove it at the end-- that’s not an environment that’s going to foster questions.

Tending to this concern, the teachers described their efforts to continually provide opportunities for their students to make their own choices in their interactions with “standard” curriculum, utilize the power of their own voice in articulating their questions

and their thoughts, and refrain from communicating to their students that their work would be judged against a specific “right way.”

The teachers communicated their beliefs in promoting what they consider to be democratic conditions and values in their classrooms, but they expressed frustration as they articulated the more traditional purposes of education, describing how they feel inevitably bound to the objectives of a greater authority than themselves which interferes with and imposes upon these values and their students’ learning. Dedicated to what they understand to be their “job,” the teachers struggled to adjust to and balance what they feel are conflicting interests that surface in their work: their value for and sense of responsibility in uplifting the voice and power of their students, addressing, as the teachers explained, the “fundamental needs” of their “real lives,” and tending to the omnisciently present agenda of “the system.” Debbie revealed early on in our conversations, “There are forces out there that say they put the kids first, and they don’t.”

The data presented in the following sections will show to the degree and methods by which antidialogic action functions to invade and colonize the world of the classroom, operating to oppress both the teachers and their students. The objectives of “the system” are presented to them as “a reality” to which they are collectively subjected. As teachers’ work is dictated from outside of their phenomenological realities experienced with their students in the classroom, they become victimized in an oppressive state, as Freire (Freire 1970) explains,

If for a person to be in the world of work is to be totally dependent, insecure, and permanently threatened- if their work does not belong to them- the person cannot be fulfilled. Work that is not free ceases to be a fulfilling pursuit and becomes an effective means of dehumanization (126).

The students learning experiences, funded by their subjective and individual realities, are then bound to the colonized objectives of the teachers who function now as “hosts” of the oppressor, and in this relationship, the students’ phenomenological worlds too become culturally invaded and colonized. Supporting the successful outcome of conquest, antidialogic acts work to manipulate both teachers and students into their unconscious acceptance and submission to their oppressed state. The data is outlined according to its relationship to Freire’s theory of antidialogic action. While Freire names the “acts” individually, the data will show the degree to which they operate in conjunction with and support of one another, further complicating in the oppressed their detectability.

The Colonization of Teaching

In talking about the traditional purposes of education, Sara made the comment that, “most people are interested in making sure that test scores are high, looking good in terms of pencil and paper, and being able to compare things about kids that you could pretty much quantify,” She added,

I don’t know if I can fit in particularly well in that, and so far I’ve kept my head above water because, the good news is, give kids a bunch of books and paper and pen and smile a lot, and they learn to read and write.

I was very interested in, both the fact that Sara feels that she needs to keep her “head above water,” and the flippant, almost sarcastic way she described how kids learn to read and write. It seems clear that Sara feels the pressure of a force that threatens to submerge her, but what I was trying to understand was the relationship between that force and what this conscientious teacher means when she suggests that her life work demands merely handing out paper and pens and smiling a lot?

Sara talked about her current theme of “life skills” that she and her kids are working on this year in her classroom. “We’re teaching organization, patience, and flexibility. She explained, “We’re talking about those words so that they can have examples of what it means to have it or not have it, to see it.” I asked Sara if this is part of a more traditional program or, more unique to her own. She responded,

It’s more unique to my own. And there may come a time when somebody starts keeping track of skills you know, scores and stuff like that and I start looking like not an adequate teacher. You know, when they start doing all the computer tallies. Because, the reality is, if a kid is upset or there’s an issue, I stop and deal with it. And it’s like, I don’t care how much they get academically compared to, are their needs being addressed fundamentally as human beings. And I don’t care. Yes, I want them to learn. And yes, I do teach them and I expect them to learn but also, there are those other things that are a higher priority to me.

I began to interpret what Sara was describing as a distinction between what *content* she feels she is expected to teach, “reading and writing” and its relationship to scores and computer tallies, and what she “in reality” feels committed to her students to tend to in their learning *processes*. Sara’s comments led me believe that the two sets of objectives do not often match, and in fact, often contradict each other. As I talked with the teachers about the relationship between teaching and learning, they spoke to this theme of interacting objectives which, in fact, present themselves in their teaching, as conflicting “realities.” I began to understand that, in the teachers’ minds, you cannot merely teach subjects *to* the students; you must teach *with* them, supporting and validating how their unique and individual experiences in the world relate to their learning of those subjects. The teachers communicated that the prescribed curriculum and other state mandates that demand their attention and cooperation in teaching, fail to connect the “fundamental

needs,” the “reality” of the students’ subjective and personal experiences to the teaching of “reading, writing, and arithmetic.” They each had a different way of describing this same phenomenon.

Rachel reflected on the traditional purposes of education,

You know, you need to know how to read. You need to know how to write and you need to know arithmetic. And you learn all those things within a certain timeline in a logical and systematic way. That’s the traditional view of education. But you know, education is not just the academic. It’s the social and the psychological too.

Later she added,

When the governor or whoever is talking about education, they’re talking about reading, writing and arithmetic. They’re not taking into consideration that it’s the whole child we’re teaching. I think they just view it as curriculum, not the whole being of the child.

Debbie and I had a discussion about a hand-out she brought me, outlining the “objectives” of the “Instruction Divisions Department” of Live Oak School District. We were discussing her belief that her students need to learn what she called, “survival skills.” I asked her if the objectives mentioned in the hand-out demonstrated a value for these skills:

Debbie- No. No.

Rebecca- I see.

Debbie- No. They’re talking about “performance, assessment, expectations, state standards.” Those are the words they’re talking about.

Rebecca- But they’re talking about basic skills. They’re not talking about the same ones?

Debbie- No.

Rebecca- What are they talking about?

Debbie- Reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Rebecca- What are you talking about?

Debbie- Holding a conversation. Admitting you’re wrong. Having a question and trying to make it a better question. Really just thinking.

Helen summed it up in talking about, as she put it, “the difference between teaching curriculum and teaching kids.” She explained:

Having my first year with fifth-grade, it’s easier in the sense that, you can do the same curriculum over and over again, just adjusting how you do it. And you get better and better at that curriculum. You know, those are the positives about teaching the same grade, you know, one single grade. But that’s when your focus is teaching curriculum. And my focus is teaching kids. And I think that that’s the primary focus shift that needs to happen for some teachers. You’re not teaching curriculum, you’re teaching kids.

Helen went on to describe what it means to teach curriculum as opposed to teaching children, explaining that, without an understanding of the children’s personal experiences, the curriculum has no meaning. The objectives in teaching the academics of the “standard curriculum” do not take into consideration the relationship between what Rachel calls the “social and psychological” aspects of the whole student which the student brings with them to the curriculum, and how that curriculum will be accepted, interpreted, affecting the degree to which it will be retained as meaningful in their lives.

In their desire to connect the curriculum to the children’s experiences and in tending to how each child individually learns, the teachers explained how they must reorganize the curriculum, amend it, and often discard its content as completely unrelated to any potential meaningful experience for their students. In this action, the teachers are then subject to not complying with what they are told, through the standards and frameworks, that they are expected to do. Herein lies their conflicting realities.

Freire (Freire 1970) posits:

One of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s

consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor (29).

The teachers recognize that there exists a conflict or discrepancy between what is dictated to them in formal objectives as a “reality” to which they are held accountable and other realities of living and learning they consider to be integral to their students’ learning experiences. They feel pressure from those objectives. But they are aware that the objectives of “the system,” which include a predetermined curriculum and designate methods of instruction, are imbedded with assumptions and generalizations about the experience of living which fail to incorporate and represent what is for many students, different realities. This imposition of an abstract, static reality which is institutionally sanctioned as “truth” on the other, more concrete and dynamic realities of the students will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. Here, what surfaces is the degree to which the teachers’ work in the classroom, and in that, their worlds, is invaded by the dominating objectives and purposes of institutionalized education. The antidialogic action of cultural invasion is operating to colonize the world of teaching by imposing *a* reality on the teachers’ subjective interpretation of their students’ realities and from those, their learning needs. Their behavior, as teachers, is prescribed for them as Freire explains, “In a situation of total conquest, the oppressed are not active as ‘considerers’ of the world. They merely respond and adapt to it” (120). And this is what the teachers are attempting to do: respond and adapt to a world of teaching and learning that has been constructed for them, without explicit and critical consideration of students’ individual experiences.

The Cultural Invasion of the Students

In order to present for the consideration of the oppressed and subjugated a world of deceit designed to increase their alienation and passivity, the oppressors develop a series of methods precluding any presentation of the world as a problem and showing it rather as a fixed entity, as something given- something to which people, as mere spectators, must adapt.

(Freire 1970, 120)

Freire's statement describes the effects of antialogic action which, in education, functions on multiple levels to oppress both teachers and students. As previously stated, curriculum content and expectations of students' achievement determined in state standards have the propensity to present the world as a "fixed entity," suppressing and marginalizing, if not silencing the subjective and complex realities of the students' living experiences. It is clear that the teachers I talked with believe that learning must be intimately connected to those personal experiences, the "real lives" of their students. Their practice as teachers is to continually relate the learning that happens in the classroom to their students' worlds. But, as Freire explains, the world embedded in education with which the teachers must reckon, is a world narrowly constructed. In their efforts to teach to broader realities, these teachers inevitably encounter obstacles, the inconsistencies between the complex worlds of their students and the world *defined* for them in curriculum packets, frameworks, and the "state's" visions and goals. My conversations with the teachers revealed those inconsistencies and painted a picture of their frustration in their attempts to teach to the students' realities institutionally buried beneath a more dominating and incessantly marginalized view of the world.

In reference to curriculum content, the teachers repeatedly made reference to the fact that the *content* they are expected to teach in the school, district, and state's adopted

programs often fails to reflect any association with students' understandings of their own living experiences.

In making the comment that, "life is learning," Sara explained how her students are alienated and isolated in the classroom from getting "intimately involved" with "real life." In describing what she called the "basic premises" of education that serve this end, Sara articulated her developing understandings of the institutionalized assumptions about learning that are responsible for separating her students' learning experiences from the tangible, concrete realities of their lives, their "learning" from becoming intimately connected to their worlds. How teachers are manipulated into supporting this process will be discussed in greater detail later, but what is interesting here is the way in which Sara recognizes how her students' interaction with and exposure to "reality" is controlled. She gives a simple, yet poignant example:

I mean, like studying penguins. I don't mean to put down penguins, but we don't have any penguins in California. I mean, we have seagulls. That's what I mean. Look around. What's here? Look around.

Helen's words reflect Sara's frustration with the irrelevancy of curriculum content to students' current realities:

The content has to be relevant. And that's why, if you teach the battles of the American Revolution to kids, they will struggle. And they'll never care about it because they don't see the application to today. And frankly, I don't see the application to today.

Rachel also gave examples of how the curriculum fails to relate to the students' experiences, but extended this notion further by adding that the power of the teacher is exercised as to whether or not this lack of connection will be problematized.

She gave an example, talking about the teaching of slavery:

You know, in fifth-grade you *do* the teaching of slavery. You do U.S. History. We come to slavery and these children have no clue what slavery is about. And I was utterly shocked the first time I taught fifth-grade and I said, "tell me what you know about slavery." And all that they could say was, "They were mean." I mean, they had no clue what it was about. Yet, when we talked about migrant workers, when we talked about people who don't have an education in this country and have to work in the very low-paying jobs, those type of things and what they have to go through to survive, slavery took on a different meaning. (*italics added*)

Rachel explained that a large percentage of the student population at Live Oak come from migrant communities. Slavery took on a different meaning for the students when they were given the opportunity to critically evaluate and explore what they were learning in relationship to their own experiences. Had this connection not have been "brought up," as Rachel said it usually is not, most of the students would have *done* that part of American History without making any meaningful, personal connection, and therein failed to engage with it critically.

Sara told me a story about the educational experience of a friend's son, who is a student in a fourth-grade classroom at Live Oak. Her comments resonated with Rachel's concern about the power of teachers to determine whether or not those connections will be made, the power to determine the relativity of curriculum content to the students' "real lives." We can see here the effects of Bowers' theory that the knowledge the teacher chooses to communicate, culturally authorized as "expert knowledge" in the classroom, is validated as "truth," while other funds and forms of knowledge remain silenced in the choosing. Sara explained how, when we fail to broaden curriculum to include the

students' worlds, we in fact deny the identity of the student, giving them the message that who they are is unrelated and irrelevant to what they must learn:

Sara- Nicholas is in a classroom where he's snuffed out.

Rebecca- Snuffed out, meaning?

Sara- Snuffed out meaning, who he is doesn't get to be in the classroom.

He walks away and a little student-person walks into the classroom each day. And until the end of the day, he doesn't turn into who he is. He never connects. It's not a personal experience for him.

Rebecca- What's being taught in that classroom?

Sara- Grammar and missions and spelling. And traditional math and traditional reading. It's like, the skills.

Helen reflects on her belief that often the teacher must adjust curriculum to fit the learning needs of the individual student. She describes Rodrigo, a student who has been referred to the school psychologist for what is believed to be attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Currently, he is nonmedicated. In this time period, Helen's concern is for Rodrigo to be engaged in learning, regardless of what the curriculum guidelines tell her she is to teach:

Well, you have to figure out where, how can we get kids to learn? Where is the door opening? You know, where is the opening? You know, if the opening is that you have to teach them to read through comic books because that's the only way you're going to attract that one student, then that's what you do. And if the only way I can get Rodrigo to be focused is to have him to a report on dinosaurs when we're not studying dinosaurs, I couldn't care less about dinosaurs, and developmentally it's below where he is because he's sort of stuck, it shouldn't matter if we're studying dinosaurs or the American Revolution, kids should be engaged in learning. You can't just teach the curriculum that's prescribed by the state.

Helen shows conscientious concern for Rodrigo's needs and recognizes how the standard curriculum fails to take into account how Rodrigo learns. What is prescribed for students' learning in the standard curriculum does not fit the prescription Helen deems appropriate

for Rodrigo. If Rodrigo were in Nicholas' class, he most likely would also have been snuffed out.

In our conversation about a handout created by the districts "Instructional Divisions Department," Debbie explained how the department's "vision" fails to address and speak to her students' personal experiences. I asked her why she had brought it to share with me. She replied,

I'm on the Standards Performance Task Force. We're supposed to report back to the State what our standards for student achievement are and what we're going to do to get them there. All this kind of stuff. It's a bunch of crap.

She begins to quote the pamphlet:

"Instructional Services will integrate effective programs and support so that all students will succeed in reaching the district's instructional standards." Which sounds really great on paper. "We believe that we will make progress towards these objectives when we have clear expectations for what students should be able to do." You know, then there's like all of these little points, right? Second to last one: "Students have a personal connection with at least one adult at school." And my first comment was, that needs to be at the top. You gotta start with the kid. What's their reality? This is all bullshit.

Debbie suggests that the language of this "vision" is abstract and built upon a framework that places the students' personal experiences at the bottom of the list. She is frustrated as she explains that you must *begin* with the world of the student, as these "objectives" that proclaim to value their learning experiences will then change. What, in fact, the motives are in manufacturing and publicizing this "vision" at this point in our conversation was unclear, though Debbie seemed to feel that it cannot be promoted without regard to the students' daily, living "reality." Debbie describes one reality in saying, "The kids are living in trailer parks with four and five people in their house. That's what their reality is.

That's what's important to them." And that reality is not tended to in the construction of the standards for and assessment of students' performance.

What is the relationship between the district's "objectives" and the students living in trailer parks? Is it a bad thing that the intention of the objectives is to "integrate effective programs and support" to insure standard achievement and "have clear expectations for what students should be able to do?" No. In fact, Lisa Delpit would argue that we must make explicit in education the connection between learning "basic skills" exercised by the dominant culture and potential for academic and professional success. But she would also demand that the objectives recognize and include an appreciation for how the subjective realities of the students' lives, their language, culture, socioeconomic status, psychological, emotional, and physical health are integral variables in how their learning will happen and to what degree they will reach those clearly defined "expectations." These relative factors are audibly silent in the construction of educational standards, as the students' complex and individual realities are institutionally invaded and colonized by the "standard" narrative imbedded in curriculum and performance expectations. As Rachel explained,

They want it to be wonderful all the way around. But they forget that we have the crack babies, the welfare and that we have the mentally incompetent in our classrooms.

To conclude this section, I recall a statement Debbie made which draws the appropriate connection between the colonization of teaching and the colonized world of the students:

I just know that I can't wake up and go to work with any sense of integrity and teach the way the system is setting me up to teach. They want the kids

to move through like cattle. And they want to blame me and/or the students for their failure.

“Blame” is the key word here. The degree to which the teachers take for themselves or displace onto their students the blame for “their” collectively identified failure to succeed in the system is directly related to the degree to which both they and their students are manipulated by that system.

The Myth of the Bad Teacher

Because there is so little interest in what caregivers often experience, mothers often deny or hide what is real and vital about the complexities of the tasks. This cultural silence about the emotional realities of child rearing creates such anxiety, guilt and feelings of inadequacy that it is too threatening for many people to examine their subjective states as they care for their children. It is as though care-givers do not have permission to speak openly. As a result, many mothers no longer even have the wish to communicate about this vulnerable area of their lives. The glut of books on parenting seem to make matters worse, for many postulate, often in a condescending tone, impossible ideals of parenthood, focusing on what we *should* do and be, instead of who we are.

(Jane Swigart, *The Myth of the Bad Mother* 1992, 10)

Myth: ...an unproved collective belief that is accepted uncritically and is used to justify a social institution.

(Swigart 1992, 2)

Swigart’s argument surrounding the silenced experience of parenting resonates with the experience of being a teacher in American society. There exists collective myths, historically sanctioned by educational institutions, which function to manipulate teachers into their uncritical acceptance and internalization of an image of what they, as teachers, *should* be doing in the classroom. The data has shown that, while it is true that the teachers struggle with the language to identify the imposing reality which encompasses them, they are aware that it exists as an “other” to their concrete experiences in the

classroom. The potential for their rising consciousness to expose the invalidity of these myths in relationship to their subjective experiences threatens the degree to which the myths will be uncritically accepted. Thus, in the effort to conform teachers to the myths about teaching and learning which protect the authority of designated “standards” for education, manipulation functions to confuse and silence teachers into passivity. Freire (1970) states, “Prior to the emergence of the people, there is no manipulation (precisely speaking) but rather total suppression” (129). The manipulation of teachers exists to continually stifle their periodically emerging consciousness of the myths as such, and in so doing, restore the suppressed state of their awareness. The following section is offered as a glimpse into the confused, frustrated and manipulated world of the teachers, who struggle desperately to validate and raise the voice of their students’ individual life experiences within a system that seeks to silence both them and their students.

In our first set of conversations, Sara articulated her insecurities about her efficacy in being the teacher she is “supposed” to be. I recall her comment about a dominant educational value, saying “most people are interested in making sure that test scores are high,” and “comparing things about kids that you can pretty much quantify.” To this she had added, “I don’t know if I can fit in particularly well in that.” In fact, she knows that she cannot and she is relieved that, thus far, as she put it, “I’ve kept my head above water.” Sara has not completely internalized the myth that to be a good teacher, she must raise test scores and quantify students’ success. However, her confidence in her work is undermined by her internalization of the myth that, in *not* tending to these objectives, she somehow does not “fit in” with a general norm and as such, she must continually tread

water to stay afloat. Despite the fact that the teachers I talked to did not seem to place a personal value on test scores, nor sought to quantitatively compare their students, the point is that Sara believes in and feels that her work is threatened by the presence and power of an abstract standard for teaching.

In our first conversation, Sara's tone was defensive, bordering on apologetic for the differences between her values for teaching and learning and those of the standard she believes exists. She said,

It's like, on a lot of levels, I'm a bad teacher because I'm not willing to just give up and say, "OK, you just give me what you want me to teach and that's all I'll do." I'm just not willing to go there. It's just that I know that my values are more important than the State Frameworks.

As she described some her own methods and instructional content, she often lowered her voice, as if guilty in confession:

Don't let anyone hear this but, I don't do a lot of *Mathland*. I use the manipulatives 'cause I really like them and I use a lot of *Math Their Way* and I feel good about that. That's something that I can sort of, individualize more. I mean, that feels better. *Mathland* is long and tedious and I don't necessarily see that they ever get the point of it.

To a certain degree, Sara feels she needs to apologize for or hide her "alternative" efforts to identify and utilize what she believes to be the best instructional methods and programs for her students' learning processes. The myth functioning here, which Sara has internalized to the degree that she feels she must be covert in her work, is that, if she does not teach according to specific guidelines prescribed for her, she is or will be seen by others, as a bad teacher.

What becomes problematic for the teachers is the discrepancy between their beliefs about the learning needs of their students, what in fact they personally and professionally

believe they need to do to be “good” teachers for their students, and their internalization of the institutionally promoted vision of what they are told a “good” teacher does. As Freire (1970) explains, “Given the circumstances which have produced their duality, it is only natural that [the oppressed] distrust themselves (45).

In our conversation about Debbie’s reasons for entering education, she described having witnessed, what was in her opinion, the effects of “bad” teachers who had failed to connect learning experiences with the personal lives of their students. She said that she hoped to change that dynamic in becoming a teacher. Her desire to be a “good” teacher then, was to make a priority including the lives of her students in their learning processes. Debbie described what has undermined that effort:

Like the standardized testing last year. It’s a complete set-up for these kids. These same kids that I went into education to help, I’m having basically to stand next to them and say, “Here’s a test in English. You’ve been basically working in Spanish all year and here’s a Standardized test in English. Have fun filling in the bubbles.

Now Debbie must reckon with her own view of herself as a “bad” teacher because personally, she will not see her teaching as successful, as her bilingual students will inevitably fail in the system.

It’s a double-edged sword for many teachers. If they teach within the guidelines prescribed for them by state frameworks and standards, they believe that they are shortchanging their students. As previously stated, embedded within those frameworks and standards is a prescription for living that do not mirror the students’ experiences. As teachers who believe that learning must be connected to their students’ funds of knowledge, to bind their students to an “other” reality is to stunt their potential to be

engaged in meaningful learning. And in so doing, the teachers become in their minds, bad teachers. On the other hand, if they do not adhere to the prescribed expectations of them, they believe that they are viewed within the system as bad teachers. And the “scores,” “computer tallies,” and “percentages,” which tend only to the institutionally authorized objectives and expectations, function to confirm for this belief.

In describing the function of antidialogic action to colonize the world of the oppressed, Freire (1970) posits,

By means of manipulation, the dominant elites try to conform the masses to their objectives...It is accomplished by the oppressors depositing myths indispensable to the preservation of the status quo...All these myths, the internalization of which is essential to the subjugation of the oppressed, are presented to them by well-organized propaganda and slogans (120).

The propaganda and slogans promoted in education function to give teachers and students indirect (and imbedded) messages about how teaching and learning *should* happen. This strategy protects the purpose of controlling and maintaining “standards” of living and learning in education. My conversations with the teachers revealed that propaganda and slogans exist in a variety of forms. Sometimes, they are silent but audible messages, as is the case in the teachers’ internalization of their own worth in association with an invisibly present standard. Other times, they are openly publicized, like the “vision” of the district’s Instructional Services Department Debbie shared. But most often, these messages are deeply buried beneath long-held, historically and traditionally constructed systems of thought. In our second interview, Sara began to expose some of those messages.

In a discussion surrounding educational reform, Sara reflected on and initiated our exploration of what she called, the “basic premises” of education.

I think that we would have to restructure a lot of our basic premises... For me to feel like this school was functioning, a real good learning environment, it would have to be less compulsory, more hands-on. I don't think that we can do it all in these little cubicles we call rooms. And if we think of learning as being within these walls or when we are doing formal homework, we're giving kids an incorrect message that learning happens in these four walls.

Her description of current conditions for learning, as "compulsory," and in "cubicles" ties together the relationship between manipulative propaganda in education and the colonization of the classroom. Since the early twentieth century, when modernist values invaded American educational institutions, teachers and students alike have bought into the myth that learning "happens" in "these four walls." And even more deeply imbedded in that myth is the myth that "knowledge" is transmitted from teacher to student in these four walls. "Knowledge" itself has become a construct to be transmitted and received only in the classroom by way of teacher to student, and that knowledge is clearly defined. It is the penguins, the battles of the American Revolution, and the limited and objectified versions of slavery in American history. The teachers that I talked with are desperately trying to break the hold of these myths, for as teachers, they are convinced that these myths do not serve the individual learning experience. As Sara confirmed, "life is learning," and life, prior to it being colonized by "the system," has happened and continues to happen in and *beyond* these four walls.

While the teachers identified in their own words, the "myths" which organize and control their teaching, they struggled for an underlying connection between them. Sara at one point simply stated (sarcastically),

We're all doing this because this is what the State guidelines say we're supposed to do because it's the third week in February. There's an awful

lot of people doing a lot of bogus things because somebody said they should.

Later in conversation Sara complained,

How is it that I have things that I have to say, “Yes, I’ve done this and I’ve done that?” It just feels so contrived. And I’m not convinced that there aren’t a million paths to get to one place.

The teachers’ awareness of how their worlds are contrived for them was expressed in short spurts of clarity, soon extinguished by resignation to a visibly heavier force. Freire’s explanation of the oppressed condition helped me to better understand the teachers’ behavior. He says, “Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the ‘order’ which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized” (44). The teachers recognize *pieces*, but their understandings are too scattered to allow for their critical analysis of how each fits together, functioning as a whole condition of their oppression.

The scattered effect of teachers’ rising consciousness speaks further of the process by which the teachers’ critical consciousness is manipulated. I heard often in the staff room, as teachers discussed current “trends” in education, what I have begun to call “the myth of the pendulum swing.” At moments when teachers seem to want to engage in communal and critical evaluation of what has become standardized in their work, they often bypass that moment by resorting to the argument that any condition in education is only temporary and soon, “the pendulum will swing back.” While it is true that “trends” exist in education too, and history does show how educational values and concerns tend to shift from one extreme to another, critical evaluation of those extremes and analysis of why, when, and how they finally shift is lost in teachers’ ultimate resort to the pendulum

argument. As myths represent the antidialogic action of manipulation, it might be worth considering how the “pendulum swing” functions to insure the stagnation of the potential for teachers’ rising consciousness. As Sara at one point revealed, in reflection of our first interview, “[The interview] made me aware in teaching, in the day to day-ness of being an education institution, that educational philosophy doesn’t fit in that much.”

The Myth of the Good Student

Myths function in institutionalized education to manipulate students into their internalization of an image of what a “good” student is. My conversations with the teachers illuminated what this image looks like, as they explained how their students’ conformation to this role inhibits their intimate connection to their learning and their teachers abilities to engage them critically in dialogue.

While the teachers identified their intentions to encourage and validate their students’ articulation of their individual life experiences in their interaction with curriculum, they expressed frustration and resentment for the institutionalized educational process which has rewarded students for their silent, passive complacency. At one point I asked Debbie if she felt that there was a sharing of power between herself and her students in their classroom. She responded,

The better question would be, “Do I think that my students have a voice, an equal voice in my classroom?” I’d say yes. Whether they exercise that voice or not is very different.

Debbie struggles with eliciting her students’ use of their “voice” in her effort to promote their subjective interpretations of curriculum content:

It’s like, you have to remind them that they have choices. They’re so used to having to ask you to go to the bathroom, and so used to having to ask you if it’s OK to think this way. “What do you want me to write in the

paragraph Ms. W? How many sentences does it have to be?” And I’m looking at them and I’m saying, what do you think about this? They don’t think for themselves. They’re so concerned with doing what the teacher tells them that they don’t really think. It’s so hard for them to sit back and think. Their first response is, “I don’t know.”

The teachers expressed their beliefs that the students have been socialized in education to accept that they do not have choices, so that when they enter these democratically-minded teachers’ classrooms, they do not know how to exercise their freedom. Debbie expressed a feeling of helplessness that, while she attempts to liberate her students’ individual thought, their potential is inevitably affected by their having been socialized by others in a variety of contexts:

But think about it: I didn’t get this kid until he was ten years old. And before that, who had him? And before that, who had him? And before they were in kindergarten, who had him? And what happens after that, before they get to school and after they get to school?

The teachers identified their students’ freedom in terms of movement in the classroom, making personal choices in their interaction with curriculum, and vocalizing their thoughts in literally questioning the “authority” of what they’ve been told by raising questions in class. They drew a link between their students’ passive behavior in the classroom to the messages they have received about the comparative value of their voice and experiences in other educational contexts and society at large. In our discussion about educational reform, Sara suggested,

I think that if people would try and teach the *why* behind, then things would be a lot better. But I don’t think that there a lot of people who are taught to question and who teach kids to question. And I think that if we did that, then we’d be OK. We’d be moving in the right direction.

Helen describes the effect of mass culture on students' value for and potential articulation of their unique interpretations of what they feel, see, and hear daily:

I think that one of the problems our society has is that there are too many people who aren't doing any thinking for themselves. They're swallowing mass culture and pretty soon, that's all there will be is the mass culture. And you know, every time a large book store moves in and a small book store goes out of business, we are nailing the coffin on that. Pretty soon every city will look like every other city. And the message to kids is you better look like everybody else so you can fit in. And that comes from racism and consumer culture where to fit in, you need to own things and do this or that.

The student comes into the classroom with the message that what is valued is their conformity and they are continually presented a picture through mass popular culture, particularly in the media, of what attitudes, behaviors and assumptions about the experience of living that they must conform to. Again, a "standard" is what is presented as "the reality" which functionally suppresses their individual realities.

While some teachers, including the ones whom I interviewed, seek to combat that standard, other educators promote it in their instructional methods and curriculum content. The research participants described the common attitudes of teachers which solidify communication of the message to students that their resistance or failure to conform will not be tolerated. And they use their culturally sanctioned authority as "experts" to threaten potential resistance. As Sara explains, "And who are the bad kids? The ones who are disruptive are the ones who have not given up all of their power to the teacher." Debbie described the "disruptive" kid as well:

If I get a kid who asks questions in my classroom, they might be yelling out, they might be interrupting, they might be up and out of their seat talking to me. That's the kid who is grabbing education by the neck and shaking it saying, "Give me more."

Debbie brought up an issue that has recently become controversial in education in reference to what is becoming the common and widespread response to students who struggle in their failure to fit the image of the “good” student. Debbie explains how students who are in fact failed *by the system*, precisely because they cannot possibly fit that image, are scapegoated into a position of acquiescence. They are medicated into predictable, and therefore controllable behavior. In a conversation about Debbie’s concern for the subjugation of students’ to poor quality education, she identifies this process:

Anybody can tell you, as an adult, you’re not going to sit through a bad movie. You’re not going to pay five bucks for a movie that’s bad. You’re gonna walk out in the middle of it. These kids don’t have a choice. They have to sit through matinees, double-features, the whole bit. They don’t get the option. And these categories that are developed. I mean, the excuses. How many times do parents say, “Oh, I think he has ADD,” or, “It’s OCD.” I mean, all these acronyms. And it may be a valid, but the point is, it’s a kid. And the kid is trying their best.

Debbie admits that in many cases, students suffer from chemical imbalances which make focusing attention and concentration difficult. Medication has been helpful to learning outcomes for students in these circumstances. But what surfaces here is the tendency in education to categorize behavior that is often “disruptive” of the classroom atmospheric norm as needing fixing in order that it be restored to what is appropriate or “good” for the teacher or school culture. What is then overlooked is the degree to which the behavior might be perfectly normal, though unique and individual, and it is the educational conditions that are in need of adjustment to fit the needs of the student. Kindlon and Thompson (1999), in their work, Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys, explain how historically in American cultures and particularly in education, we have

socialized boys into emotional isolation and physical restraint such that, when what is in fact normal behavior, which is culturally and institutionally marginalized, surfaces in the classroom, it is viewed as inappropriate and “out of control.” They posit:

We have seen cases in which a parent or teacher wants us to check for ADD because a boy is having trouble concentrating in math class: There was a boy whose best friend had recently tested HIV-positive, a boy whose father had died of cancer with a strong genetic link, and a boy new to a school who was being unmercifully teased. These are fairly extreme cases, but they point out that, when thinking about ADD and normal boy behavior, the first question to ask is, “What are the reasonable expectations for a boy his age, and are there any plausible nonmedical explanations for his behavior?” Plausible explanations may include family and parenting issues or a lack of fit for a boy in a school, in the match of either teacher, school culture, or overall expectations (46).

Debbie is convinced that the acronyms are an excuse-- an excuse to avoid looking deeper within the child, the teacher, and school culture to determine why a student has or is having difficulty learning. But, as the data of this research is revealing, the personal, unique and individual life and subsequent needs of the student is disregarded in favor of clearly defined, yet often unexamined expectations and assumptions about how students should learn, and even more critically, how they should *be*. And thus students, in many cases, are medicated into conformity. As Freire notes, “The educated individual is the adapted person because she or he is better ‘fit’ for the world” (57).

A World Divided

Perhaps the most debilitating antidialogic action operating to disassociate teachers from their work and students from their intimate involvement in their learning is what Freire calls, Divide and Rule. It is the process by which teachers are manipulated into isolation, from interaction and critical discourse with one another and their students, and

by which students are similarly distanced from critical engagement with their learning processes. This action functions on deeply imbedded levels in the consciousness of both teachers and students such that they often fail to see that they are in fact working against each other towards the same educational goals.

In our initial conversation, I asked Sara if she seeks to share her attitudes and values about teaching with others. She responded, “I do in my ‘It’s Elementary’ meetings with these parents and with the principal and single teachers. But not with the overall staff. I just assume people didn’t know.” At this point, she didn’t say why not. Later, in the same interview, I asked Sara if she felt that we had a responsibility as teachers to respond to what she had articulated a value for, “teaching [students] how to maneuver in [society], how to survive in it, how to retain themselves through it.” She answered, “Well, we give that responsibility to teachers. I think that as a society we have a responsibility to train parents even more so. I don’t have a lot of faith in teachers.” At this point in our conversations, Sara was hesitant to associate herself with other teachers, believing that their objectives and values differ greatly from her own. Later, having time to reflect on our first interview, Sara explained to me:

It was just so exciting to talk to you. It just stirred up stuff inside me. And it made me aware how that’s the juice that makes me want to be here. It’s like, I do feel strongly and passionately about this kind of stuff and I do want to talk to people about my philosophy. I do want people to know about my philosophy and my beliefs because I want to change people.

It seems that it was our dialogue that encouraged Sara to aspire to communication with others. Prior to our discussions, she had felt isolated as she had said, “I want to be a part of a staff. I say that I want to because I don’t feel that I really am.” Due to the frequent,

yearly changeover in administration at Live Oak Elementary, the teachers did express a sense of disconnection. Lack of cohesion at upper educational levels has had a trickle-down effect on the teachers. Nonetheless, this condition has only worsened a disassociation among the staff that Sara felt already existed. She explained that, while she enjoys discussing educational philosophy with parents, she longs to have the same worthwhile discourse with staff:

Unfortunately, it's all parents. No staff. And it's been disappointing because I want to also talk to people who have some theory behind what they're doing as opposed to a bunch of shmucks trying to get to June.

The question is, do other members of the staff consider or have the desire to share educational theories and values? My feeling is that the teachers I spoke with do. They just believe that others do not because they have not had the space or opportunity to gather to discuss their personal and collective concerns regarding their subjective experiences in the classroom and in the system at large. As their subjective realities are colonized in the classroom, many teachers revert into their own space, complacent in their dominated state and/or believing, as Freire puts it, "in the diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor" (46), in the futility of communicating their "unique" and problematic experiences in the classroom. He (1970) explains,

As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically "accept" their exploitation. Further, they are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation (46).

The "pendulum swing" seems to be at least one myth functioning to convince teachers of the futility of discussing what they may consider to be much needed educational reform.

I cannot speak for the staff at Live Oak in regards to their attitudes towards personal and professional communication, but the research participants seemed to feel that they are alone in their endeavors. As Debbie expressed, in response to my question as to what she thinks she is doing differently from other teachers, "I don't know. I'm still learning what works and I'm burning out faster than the rest of my colleagues."

Part of the reason Debbie feels that she is "burning out" has to do with her view of her role in the classroom as that of a "baby-sitter." She struggles with the fact that her students do not exercise their freedom in her classroom and often resorts to blaming them for their oppressed state of being. In making a comment about the poor quality of her students' work, Debbie said:

I would like to think that I give kids the opportunity to take risks, to do things in a safe way. To better their products if they're not happy with their products. To engage in a process. To know that this is only one assignment. But if over and over again they're slapping me in the face every time I collect, then I'm not going to put up with it. Again and again, I'm not going to put up with it. That's the bottom line.

What is happening here is that, while Debbie seems to understand, as the data has shown, the process by which her students' have been dominated and socialized into passivity, she is frustrated with that reality, becoming disassociated from and in conflict with her students.

Helen described how other teachers are also disassociated from their students due to the irrelevancy of curriculum content, and thus, their teaching, to the students' individual lifeworlds:

And it's been my experience at Live Oak, that the [teachers] who have not made the shift [from teaching curriculum to teaching students], are the ones who don't like the students very much. And I don't know which came first. Is it, they don't really like kids, so that when they teach kids the

curriculum, they don't respond so they hate the kids more? Or if its, they've been teaching the curriculum and the kids don't get it because it's not what they need, so then they're frustrated with their students. There's a teacher who made the comment my first year, "I would really love my job if it weren't for the kids."

The teachers made similar comments to the affect that, as Sara put it, "I just know that if I had more support, I'd feel more powerful." They feel a lack of support for their teaching experiences because, to their only half-conscious awareness, their experiences have been colonized by a system of "standards." As the teachers are divided from one another, from their students, and ultimately, from their work, and as students are divided from their critical and personal engagement with their learning processes in that their realities have been suppressed beneath the dominating objectives of traditional educational methods and curriculum content, they all become victims in the colonization of the classroom.

CHAPTER SIX

RECLAIMING THE CLASSROOM

No educational reform can get off the ground without an adult actively and honestly participating—a teacher willing and prepared to give and share aid, to comfort and to scaffold. Learning in its full complexity involves the creation and negotiation of meaning in a larger culture, and the teacher is the vicar of the culture at large. You cannot teacher-proof a curriculum any more than you can parent-proof a family. And a major task for any effort at reform—especially the participatory kind I’ve briefly outlined—is to bring teachers into the debate and into the shaping of change. For they are the ultimate change agents.

(Bruner 1996, 84)

An investigation of an ideal, while it can inspire us, can also make us aware of how far from that we remain—indeed, how we often create and maintain conditions that work against it.

(Burbules 1993, 146)

This thesis posed the question as to whether or not education could serve the function of creating conditions for learning where students might participate in the critical evaluation of culturally sanctioned norms and behaviors. I have argued that the classroom is the ideal “place,” both physically and metaphorically, to problematize the growing instances of violence, discrimination, and alienation we witness in today’s society with such regularity they too are becoming a part of the uncritically accepted “normal” patterns that govern our lives. The research has shown the degree to which a new vision of living and learning may be realized through educational processes active in the classroom.

While teachers attempt to uplift and validate their own and the experiential living realities of their students in their mutual engagement with educational curriculum, their efforts are thwarted by the fact that their work has been colonized by the greater authority of traditional educational purposes. The standards and objectives imbedded in those purposes present “the world” as a limited and fixed reality, thereby suppressing, marginalizing if not silencing the subjective, complex and multiple realities of both teachers and students. If we intend to act upon *our* world in the effort to re-establish behavioral and attitudinal norms which may function to promote a more just, egalitarian, and peaceful society, we must seek to understand how this antidialogic process operate in the effort to combat it.

While teachers and students alike are oppressed by the same conditions, Bruner appropriately identifies the teacher as the vicar of the culture at large and the research has shown that indeed, the teachers are responsible for communicating and re-presenting the world to students, however prescribed that world may be. Thus, any critical investigation of cultural norms active both inside and out of the classroom must begin with the teacher, as students’ understandings are inevitably influenced by, if not bound to the “model” teachers present to them. The critical education of the teacher is therefore paramount to any effort to assist students in their own critical learning processes where the social reality defined by traditional forms of authority may be challenged. In effect, an educational trickle-down theory can serve the development of critical consciousness, communicative competence, cultural and critical literacy in generations of individuals. Should we choose to reclaim the classrooms, from pre-school through graduate school, to serve this purpose,

we can create conceptual opportunities, the cognitive space to reconstruct and act upon our own visions for the world. The possibility of such educational reform insists that we take a closer look at revolutionizing curriculum content and methods of instruction at all levels of education.

Teacher Education

Debbie at one point said, “I cannot come to work with any sense of integrity and teach the way the system is setting me up to teach.” As she said, she is “burning out.” Sara likewise expressed feelings of being demoralized fighting “the uphill battles” she encountered upon entering the classroom. How might these teachers approach their professional realities differently had their own credential education programs funded an understanding of the historical, social, political, and cultural imbeddedness of the canonized knowledge, standards, expectations, objectives, task forces, computer tallies and scores of institutionalized education? What if Debbie had the language to name these “words” as the propaganda and slogans Freire deems integral to the success of antidialogic action? What if Sara was prepared to meet the uphill battles functioning to manipulate her democratic educational intentions, armed with theory in her one hand, and critical learning experience in deconstructing the authority of “the system” in the other?

Teachers must be prepared to meet the system as it exists. Only in understanding it can it be firstly survived, then evaluated and reorganized. As Freire (1970) states,

When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it only in fragments which they do not perceive as constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality (85).

The research participants recognize that institutionalized objectives govern their work, but they fail to see the origins of those objectives as they struggle against an authority they cannot name and to which they feel they are inevitably accountable.

Freire notes,

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of the oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform (31).

The teachers must come to see the reality of their situation as limiting in the development of their conceptual understandings of it, but they must also develop and begin to utilize a language that describes it, encapsulates it, and can be used within that reality to transform it. With this goal in mind, I offer Freire's (1970) words:

Just as the oppressor, in order to oppress, needs a theory of oppressive action, so the oppressed, in order to become free, also need a theory of action (164).

I recommend that an understanding of the following concepts become integral to the curriculum which funds the development of that theory of action:

- **The Sociology of Knowledge**-- that teachers come to recognize that knowledge, especially the knowledge imbedded in the curriculum of institutionalized education, has a human origin—that it originates from social patterns for organizing thought and behavior and represents historical, political, and cultural influences and relationships of power. Here, teachers may come to understand that, as “knowledge” has been humanly constructed, it may be humanly reconstructed and they may use their own subjective and experiential realities to fund their participation in that process.

- **Relativism of Authority**-- Central to the potential for the theory of the sociology to function in a liberating pedagogy is the notion that, if knowledge is created and generated collaboratively, each individual must be considered to hold a personal expertise of their own experience in the world; every human experience must be valued and validated as a “true” representation of what it “means” to live in the world. Here, teachers must come to see the value of their own authorship in constructing knowledge on an equal level and in relationship to the authority of the abstract knowledge of that which has become canonized.
- **Socialization**-- An understanding of socialization processes is necessary for individuals to understand, not only how knowledge is *made*, but their power to uphold or challenge it in the socialization processes of others. In the effort to challenge the culturally authorized knowledge that may work to oppress our individual experience, we must come to recognize how that knowledge becomes infused in our own understandings; we must come to see our own social, political, historical, and cultural imbeddedness.
- **Dialogue**-- We must seek to raise the voices of our experiences in claiming our right to take part in the construction of knowledge. To reconstruct notions of knowledge which include, represent, and symbolize the individual experience, we must find a method of conversation which supports an equity of power and promotes collaboration. For, to consider such “knowledge” as whole depends upon the inclusivity, integration, and authoritative balance of the individual parts.

Teacher education programs have the potential and the power to engage future teachers in critical discourse regarding the historically and culturally imbedded purposes (or objectives) of education functioning in traditional curriculum content and instructional methods. Based upon a curriculum funded by the theoretical foundations suggested, future teachers can have the opportunity at this crucial pre-entry stage in their careers as educators to evaluate both what and how cultural systems, patterns of thought and relationships of power are communicated and maintained in the classroom. They may challenge those constructs and revise them, supported by their own experiential realities, as they develop their own educational pedagogies. Thus, they may enter the classroom with the experience and language, the competence to engage their students in similar critical educational processes.

It is important to note that being prepared to meet the system is one thing, to survive it and transform it is another. This research revealed the degree to which the antidialogic action “Divide and Rule” functions most effectively to disassociate teachers and students from what Freire identifies as their “true vocation” in the world, to become more fully human. In that their individual realities are suppressed beneath the dominating objectives of “the system” and as their world in the classroom is colonized, teachers and students must unite to liberate those realities in their unveiling of *their* world. Dialogue, as it has been described in this research, promises to serve as a medium through which the individual experience may be heard and incorporated into newer understandings of what that world looks like.

It is imperative that teachers be committed in their engagement of that unveiling on a daily basis; they are the only ones who can speak to their experiences in the classroom--they must be willing to “name” those experiences such that they may come to see the likeness in them. As teachers share their realities and bring them to the forefront for analysis and reflection, they liberate themselves and those realities from exile and become the “considerers” of their experiential worlds. Burbules (1993) offers,

Answers, solutions, and agreements are fleeting things in human history--while the fabric of dialogical interchange sustains the very human capacity to generate and revise those provisional outcomes (146).

I would like to close by turning the attention of this research to what has been quoted heretofore as “the system.” When this research began, and throughout the writing of it, it was important to identify that canonized “knowledge” has a source. It is humanly derived but more importantly, humanly derived by those with the *power* to determine its contents. “The system” reflects that power and I have been obsessed in trying to identify the faces behind this authoritative body. What has become apparent in the exploration of socialization and antidialogic action is the fact that the color and shape of those faces have changed over time and indeed, as we unconsciously become the hosts of our cultural knowledge, we know not who we are. Thus, I believe that in attempting to point our finger at the “bad guy,” the one we have predominantly identified as the “White male,” we may fail to recognize our own role in wielding power to the disadvantage of others. While canonized knowledge does have historical roots in the dominant culture in American society, current norms, within which we live our lives, are maintained in the present. And we continue to participate in that maintenance process. Thus, this research asks that each

of us consider and examine our part, our responsibility in every act of violence, discrimination, and oppression that we bear witness to. Ultimately, we are accountable to what we must claim as *our* world.

EPILOGUE

Writing this thesis has been the most challenging task I have ever accomplished. It asked me to commit my emotional, physical and mental energy to the search for understanding culturally influenced and therefore, deeply imbedded human phenomena. Involved as such, in the full and relative humanness of my own attitudes and behavior, I became as much an integral part of the research as the “data” I was collecting. My understandings of the research, fueled by my experiences on site, were shaped by my own reflective thought processes functioning in too many moments of the day—at the grocery store, in the shower, on those long six-mile runs. I cared very much to allow the pieces, what I had wanted to call the “answers” to fall into their own place and order. So often I had to wait for the right words to form comprehensively in my spinning analytical mind, to come cohesively through my fingers onto the keyboard. At the computer, I felt an unbearable weight of responsibility to authentically recreate in language what the research was revealing. Though I ached for psychic resolve, each day I learned patience greater than I have ever experienced as the mother of a toddler. I learned to trust myself.

While the research focused primarily on the experiences of teachers, the theories which had funded the topic profoundly affected contexts outside of education, the spaces of my more personal life. Throughout the research, as I engaged in dialogue with family members, friends and neighbors, I came to understand and found the language to name the

cooperative effort we become caught up in as we seek, often desperately, to create and identify the meaning in our daily lives. I gained a newfound appreciation for what it means to understand, and moved beyond the intent to claim that I “know.” I learned to be a part of dynamics and have found peace in the value, the spiritual and philosophical priority of seeing relationship and perspective.

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