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Liberating education through the voices of students

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LIBERATING EDUCATION THROUGH
THE VOICES OF STUDENTS

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
Amanda Greenhalgh

May 2000

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ABSTRACT

LIBERATING EDUCATION THROUGH THE VOICES OF STUDENTS

By Amanda Greenhalgh

This thesis proposes the question of whether teachers can incorporate student realities in the curriculum, including those realities which contradict educational ideology. Aspects of socialization are discussed and analyzed throughout the project in order to find the educational correlation between student lives inside and outside the classroom. This participatory research study involves both observational field notes and conversational interviews with nine sixth grade students from an East San Jose public school in San Jose, California. The results suggest that the process of problem-posing, whereby students are exposed to an empowering education through their own reflection and dialogue, is a liberating form of education that values differentiated human realities.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROJECT OF POSSIBILITY: CONNECTING STUDENT VOICE TO THE CURRICULUM

If you become a lifetime learner along with your students, if you join them in not knowing, not being sure, the excitement of unfolding is yours as well as theirs. Unfolding children can be the teachers for unfolding parents and educators. Lifetime learning is like lifetime living. It begins with an inner energy source and grows richer in our listening and speaking (Young 1998, 38).

My first day of student teaching at Jackson Elementary School in East San Jose represented a turning point in my personal development and educational growth. Until that day, I had read many educational theories, but it was finally time for me to apply those theories and philosophies to practical involvement with students. As I entered the campus, I wondered what my teaching strategies would be. Will I remember all the skills in math, reading, and other academic subjects? How can I make the curriculum interesting and creative for the students? I

assumed education was a universal constant; learners were learners no matter what their age, culture, ethnicity, or social experiences. Although part of that statement remains true, all individuals have the curiosity and capacity to learn, I underestimated the importance of student culture which constitutes reality in the lives of the learners.

In order to work effectively with my students from Jackson, it was important for me to take a step back and learn where these students came from, what influenced their social world, and what realities entered the classroom. C.A. Bowers (1987) states that,

...at a general level of understanding, socialization is seen as the process of learning the habits, norms, and ways of thinking essential for fitting into society (33).

When I began my student teaching at Jackson Elementary School, I knew I wanted education to be integrated within the lives of the learners, particularly through understanding their social worlds. So when I entered a sixth grade classroom, told the students of my own educational background and what I hoped to accomplish with them, I expected questions that paralleled my social experiences such as: Which subjects are you going to teach us? What are your own personal hobbies? What did you study at UCLA? Instead, their first question was, "Do you like wrestling?"

My initial reaction was wonderment and confusion. I was perplexed as to why my students had asked such a question. The rest of the class snickered. My mentor teacher shot him

a look of disapproval. I wondered if he was attempting to insult me in a way that was incomprehensible to me.

As time passed in this sixth grade classroom, I grew to understand that World Wrestling Federation (WWF) was a popular form of entertainment for my students. My students made references to "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, a popular wrestler, and imitated the language and symbolic gestures characteristic of the WWF. The language of WWF contained profanity and gestures that had sexual and violent innuendoes.

As boys and girls whispered about what happened on *Sunday Night Heat*, I discovered that this form of popular culture was repudiated by the Jackson Staff. Jenny, one of my students, informed me, "No talking about wrestling at school." I had never seen a WWF match. I assumed the anti-violence ideology of education had been imposed on the students which is why their interests were silenced.

Nevertheless, I asked, "Why?" Jenny continued to inform me,

Well, last month, two groups of sixth graders from different classes reenacted a wrestling match in the boys bathroom. Trash cans were thrown and people got hurt.

At that time, the Jackson Staff had made a decision not to discuss previously viewed wrestling matches because students might get worked up leading to potential violence. I didn't think much more about the issue. I, too, began shooting disapproving looks characteristic of the Jackson staff when I heard references to WWF.

I thought it would be interesting to better understand my students' culture by watching WWF matches so I began to watch a Wednesday night match called *RAW is WAR* and Sunday's popular, *Sunday Night Heat*. On one show, the crowd cheered on the wrestlers while both men and women wrestlers attacked each other both inside the ring and out. Most of the time, wrestlers didn't even make it into the ring before being aggressively attacked. The dirtier the fight, the louder the crowd cheered and the voices of the announcers became more animated. The fireworks and music became more intense. If the referee tried to calm the commotion, he was attacked as well. The most popular matches were not the organized events planned between individuals or tag teams. The fights receiving the loudest approval were when wrestlers from backstage ran out, deciding to get involved in the match.

Women paraded into the ring with low cut blouses exposing their breasts, wore skirts which barely cover their back sides, and smiled towards an audience holding banners reading, "Show me your puppies" (with a picture of breasts drawn under the words). The men made symbolic gestures towards their genitals. One wrestler, Mr. Ass, wore tight spandex shorts with women's lips imprinted on the front and back. Profanity drove the majority of language as wrestlers described what they would like to do to their opponent. Sometimes the words were bleeped, but never without assurance that the audience could contextualize the language.

As a teacher, I began to understand why the Jackson administration prohibited reference and ideas related to the WWF. Educators function through a political and cultural ideology which oppose unnecessary violence, sexual exploitation, and profanity. The WWF seemed to promote those very aspects of social life which contradict educational ideology. A question began to form in my mind: how can educators legitimate the expression of a student voice based on their social realities when those realities contradict our own educational/political vision?

I knew that the socialization students entered class with was a very powerful reality. Bowers (1987) states that teachers need to examine how socialization contributes to acquiring the conceptual maps, or schema, for students. Each student has a different social experience, therefore, each student will enter the classroom with a different schema. How the teacher responds to the experiences of socialization will effect the conceptual frameworks and language available to the students for acknowledging his or her taken-for-granted beliefs. Bowers asserts that socialization has a dual nature in education; to either support false consciousness (by celebrating the status quo) or liberate thought. The role of the teacher is to

identify the "moves" in the language game of socialization that can lead to a more liberating form of education (Bowers 1987, 32).

The ideas of Dewey and Whitehead (as discussed by Doll 1993) support the notion of social constructivism which emphasizes individual experiences as a means of constructing one's perception of reality. Each individual undergoes personal social experiences which are assimilated and accommodated (in Piagetian terms) in one's schema. Reality is not an objective existence removed from the individual; reality is the creation of existence constructed by one's mind through his or her social experiences. What was unique about the WWF culture experienced by my students at Jackson was that this social experience was not unique to just one student. Many students at the school subscribed to WWF which enabled the transmission of ideas to become a collective reality.

WWF promotes ideas incompatible with the Jackson ideology, therefore a "no talking about wrestling at school rule" was established resulting in the silencing of the realities and voices of the students. Bowers (1987) states that the phenomenon of silencing student voices instead of integrating those voices within the curriculum constitutes an area of audible silence,

an analysis of the curriculum should be sensitive to those areas of social and individual experience that are not presented in the curriculum- areas of human experience about which there is a collective silence in the larger society due either to a lack of communicative competence in focusing and articulating the issues or to the fear that often arises when it is no longer possible to escape existential choices forced on us by critical awareness. . . . An audible silence refers to those areas

of experience where there is an awareness that is not, for one reason or another, not communicated. (Bowers 1987, 63-64).

Bowers (1987) continues to explain that an audible silence is not a silence due to taken for granted beliefs because a conscious awareness of the silence is present. An audible silence is a conscious form of socialization that seeks to silence an idea because greater society is unprepared to deal with the issue.

The "no talking about wrestling at school" rule enforced by Jackson personnel constituted such an audible silence for two reasons. First, the ideas represented by the WWF contradicted an ideology set forth by the educators at Jackson. Second, neither teachers nor administrators knew how to address the issue with the students. The students' culture was too far removed from that of the staff experiences. Silencing the culture became much easier than addressing aspects of a culture with which we are unfamiliar.

This issue of audible silences is important to address in terms of understanding the lives of students. Fear of difference may sometimes cause those in power to silence the voices of others, therefore creating an audible silence. Upon reflection of my practice as a student teacher, this issue resonated with me throughout my practice. In November, 1998, I wrote:

Before I began my student teaching at Jackson Elementary School, I recognized the differences in social experiences between myself and most of the students.

Throughout this semester, I've tried to understand and learn about those social differences through conversations with my mentor teacher and the students. I often wonder if I promote audible silences through my lack of understanding the student's social experiences. I don't understand what it's like to come to this country without speaking the language or having English language support at home. I don't know what it feels like to not have anyone encouraging me to work towards a college degree. Furthermore, I don't have the experience of having limited economic means to explore technology and other educational resources outside the classroom. To sum what I'm saying, I don't want to unconsciously create audible silences in my classroom because of lack of experience or understanding the lives of the students... I hope that conversation, dialogue, interaction, and creating the learning environment concurrently with the students will promote an understanding of all class members including myself (Greenhalgh 11/98, Critical Response Paper 5- EDTE 244).

Realizing how complex the social circumstances facing students and educators at Jackson Elementary School really was, I became interested in developing "a project of possibility" as described by Simon. A project of possibility is:

centrally committed to the task of creating specific social forms (such as schooling) that encourage and make possible the realization of a variety of differentiated human capacities- rather than denying, diluting, or distorting those capacities . . . Such an agenda requires not only our efforts in schools but our alliance with other transformative projects being undertaken in our homes, workplaces, and in our communities (Simon 1989, 136 & 138).

A project of possibility takes into account both real and present conditions (the social realities of students), and conditions still to come which is trying to bring into being.

It empowers those who have been silenced, the students, and validates their experiences and voices.

Jackson Elementary School has a high proportion of non-white students. The school is usually very conscious of addressing multi-cultural issues through bilingual classes, attempts to celebrate various cultural events, and evidence of sensitivity to the various ethnic realities in the school. Nevertheless, no one had made the conscious connection between WWF, the students, and the ideas of WWF which affect the conceptual maps of the students.

In fact, the opposite approach had been taken in silencing the voices and interests of our students. The Jackson personnel silenced student voice in hopes of imposing a different ideology at school. Can educators really promote differential realities which exist inside and outside the classroom? Is there a way educators can attempt to identify and question student interests and realities and create an educational environment which intellectually explores this reality as opposed to the current silent denial?

During the months of May and June, 1999, I was fortunate to obtain a second grade position at Jackson for a teacher who was unable to complete the school year. Throughout the first few weeks, I realized that the WWF culture had also reached the primary students at Jackson. During free art time, Marcos asked me cautiously, "Can I draw Stone Cold?" Another day, he brought a WWF character to

sharing time. The rest of the students gazed at me wide-eyed. They, too, were aware of the school rule, "no wrestling". In math, I let students use a large plastic clock to test one another on time. Students giggled as Ferdinand set the time to 3:16, the number that Stone Cold, Steve Austin, has adopted from a biblical passage to signify "I'm going to kick your ass!"

I questioned my students about their recognition of the violence depicted in wrestling. Marcos responded, "It's just fake, we know that." Other students nodded their heads in agreement. The purpose of the show in terms of profit, the underlying messages sent to viewers through language and image representation, how the producers and network define "entertainment" were lost on them.

I realized I had a great opportunity to discuss the issue of wrestling with the students instead of ignore their student culture. To plan my course of action, I gathered preliminary data in order to know how to address the issue. At our Friday class meeting, I asked, "How many people have seen wrestling at least one time?" Fifteen out of the twenty students raised their hands. My next question was, "How many people watch WWF regularly?" Twelve students raised their hands.

As our conversation developed, I learned that most students began to watch the show because an older sibling or relative watched. This form of entertainment was more than

just an occasional hobby. It was a cultural medium for many families living in the areas surrounding Jackson.

Then I asked the students to share stories or tell why they liked WWF. Marcos said it was "cool because of the fireworks, the moves, and the music." Ernesto liked it because "it looks real and it isn't." Elena said, "I like wrestling because sometimes it's funny because the guys speak and they talk weird". Kerry added:

I didn't like it but my little cousin, he's two, he likes to see it alot. Sometimes my little cousin fights with my sister, and sometimes he jumps on her... he gets up on the couch and he jumps on her like the wrestlers do!

Carlos piped in, "Yeah, my brother is ten and he learned how to do wrestling from Nintendo 64 and he jumps on me and it hurts."

I asked, "What do you mean they speak weird?" Elena responded, "Can I say the bad word?" I said "No." I asked, "How many people have heard a bad word on WWF?" The twelve students who watch the show regularly, raised their hands. I made plans to expand this conversation next Friday, hoping I could taint their perception of WWF and impose my own ideology upon them.

I immersed myself in reading *Education for Critical Consciousness* by Paulo Freire (1973) in order to learn how to "problematize" the cultural realities of my students. Freire engaged in dialogue with the people in order to problematize

their realities and empower the participants to alter their relations with both natural and social forces. He states,

the Brazilian people could learn social and political responsibility only by experiencing that responsibility (Freire 1973, 36).

He researched the vocabulary, longings, frustrations, disbelief's, and hopes of the people then "codified" these realities by obtaining pictures to represent familiar local situations. Through the discussion of the existential situations represented through art, both reading and participating in a true democracy became crucial for his Brazilian participants.

I decided I would try to "codify" the wrestling culture of my students. I bought a WWF magazine and cut out images that depicted the characteristic violence and sexual exploitation. I pre-planned questions which were directed at the recognition of the violence and sexual innuendoes.

Our second class meeting was filled with frustration and confusion. I presented the photos to the students. They appeared shocked and confused. Some students put their heads down in embarrassment. Others were eager to view the magazine from which I cut out the pictures. Their reactions left me feeling frustrated. I attempted to direct their responses to the photos by asking questions such as:

Is it good to hit someone over the head like this? Are men supposed to strangle women as seen in this photo? What do you think?

What I learned was that one cannot build authentic conversation in advance.

Although I asked the students to be honest in their responses, they seemed to struggle, saying what they thought I wanted them to say. When questioned why they responded in a particular way, they would repeat the Jackson mantra: "It is bad to hit others. We should keep our hands to ourselves." When the lunch bell rang, Marcos approached me and asked, "Can I keep the photos?"

My intention was to initiate conversation that would counteract the appeal of WWF. I hoped that students would suddenly don new lenses. What I learned was that one can not problem-pose through inauthentic dialogue. I had asked closed-ended questions specific to my own interests as opposed to my students' interests. I had used my language to attempt to recreate their cultural realities which I deemed offensive.

A project of possibility, on the other hand, encourages differentiated human capacities as opposed to a specific political ideology often enforced in education. As educators, it is our responsibility to educate students as opposed to silencing their voices. This is often a very challenging process as traditional teaching encourages only the voices of experienced authority.

Nevertheless, education can only be meaningful to these students if their socially constructed experiences are

validated and addressed. I attempted this when allowing the WWF culture to enter our class, but subconsciously degraded their culture through my language and personal objectives. I found myself struggling with the contradiction of validating aspects of student culture which I disagreed with, and approaching student reality objectively so that students had the opportunity to educate themselves through experience. Therefore, a question formed in my mind which I plan to investigate throughout this thesis. How can educators justify student voice based on their social experiences when those social realities contradict our own educational vision?

CHAPTER TWO

LIBERATING THE VOICES OF STUDENTS THROUGH A POST-MODERN APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Although the school curriculum is not the only source of the student's conceptual maps, it is nevertheless an important vehicle for providing them with the vocabulary and conceptual frameworks necessary for expressing how they think about the problems of everyday life (Bowers 1987, 81).

In order to develop a project of possibility whereby students' socializing experiences and voices are incorporated into the curriculum, educators must first establish theoretical groundwork for a functioning paradigm. Traditional education has sought to silence student voices while maintaining clear boundaries of authority between teacher and student. Incorporating social experiences and encouraging student voice in the classroom requires dialogue and reflection thereby adopting a post-modern perspective of curriculum.

A Modern vs. Post-Modern Perspective of Curriculum

The need for stability in 17th century Europe provided the fertile context for the growth of a mathematical/scientific/mechanical cosmology. Industrialism was the social theme of the times which led science to become the basis of the modern paradigm. Science dominated social and

intellectual thought and was the driving force behind traditional curriculum. Newton's *Principia* characterized this period in which the discovery of Nature's Laws gave humanity control over nature, therefore "civilizing" nature. Furthermore, the idea of a rational, ordered universe emerged.

The idea of "controlling" nature revolutionized education as the goals of a machine-oriented curriculum were separated from the instructional process. The Tyler Rationale (as discussed by Doll 1993) emerged which emphasized the predetermination of objectives. Goals followed a linear sequence and educational ends were set prior to experience. Learning was a controlled outcome that could be measured.

The idea of a teacher-driven, or teacher-centered curriculum grew in popularity with the students being the passengers in the classroom and instruction being linear. The end goals of education were chosen first then the instructional methods to accomplish those ends mean were adapted. This meant that curriculum was organized in sequential steps. Therefore, there was an attempt to define curriculum in terms of the materials and content as opposed to a process.

Freire (1970) draws a metaphor between the modern era of education represented and a banking system. Dialogue was denied in the classroom while knowledge was deposited in the

minds of the passive learners. Although students had varying social realities,

instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the student patiently receive, memorize, and repeat (Freire 1970, 53).

Knowledge was not something created by the individual, but rather received based upon the deposits of the teacher.

Before discussing the characteristics of a post-modern era of curriculum, it is important to analyze the philosophical tenets of post-modernism. Burbules (1993) states that post-modernism is a vague term but may be described by three central issues. First is the analysis of power and hierarchy as the central force for social and political organizations. He asserts that,

no tradition has emphasized so strongly the infusion of power relations into culture, language, sexuality, and other aspects of human life that are not usually seen as arenas of domination and oppression (Burbules 1993, 2).

The second theme of post-modernism is the uniqueness and worth of cultural world views including thinking, valuing, or speaking, in contrast to traditional standards. Finally, the third theme of post-modernity is often referred to as "the logic of identity" which is,

the philosophical view that our intellectual aim is to find common underlying principles, generalizable rules, universal definitions as a sign of theoretical coherence and credibility. Postmodernists deny that there can be any one system of thought or value that will compromise the variety of human beliefs, feelings, and experiences (Burbules 1993, 3).

Acknowledging socialization as a primary factor of human expression, the emerging era of post-modernism attempts to transform the modern definition of curriculum. According to postmodernists, the content of education should be embedded within the instructional process, thereby allowing education to be a form of socialization. Doll (1993) describes the post-modern era as "a more complex, pluralistic, unpredictable system or network" (Doll 1993, 3) that is chaotic and asymmetrical. Post-modernism rejects the rigid dichotomies of objective thought and subjective experience imposed by modernism and attempts to find tension between equilibrium and disequilibrium, therefore allowing education to be flexible. Post-modernism urges the mutual exploration of knowledge in the classroom by both the teacher and the students, therefore drastically transforming their relationship. Furthermore, "open, interactive, communal conversation is key to a post-modern curriculum" (Doll 1993, 7). Through a post-modern perspective of curriculum, dialogue which communicates student's social experiences, are incorporated in the classroom.

Technical vs. Grounded Approach

A technical vs. grounded approach to education analyzes education in terms of socialization within a modern and post-modern world view. Donald Oliver (1990) presents an interesting and useful analysis of the technical,

knowledge-as-separate object approach vs. the grounded, knowledge-as-intimate relationship educational approach in "Grounded Knowing: A Post modern Perspective on Teaching and Learning". He defines and describes the classroom implications of a technical approach which has dominated our educational system, through a modernist paradigm, for over a century. Oliver (1990) states that,

technical knowing . . . begins with language describing sharply delineated qualities of events, with a defined object or set of events that can be precisely stated (Oliver 1990, 65)

such as the "no talking about wrestling at school" rule.

Technical knowing comes from efforts to create highly controlled and managed settings, as in the case of school rules which deny student's social experiences. The implication of this mode of thought was

humans- at least in terms of their senses- became a tangle bundle of secondary qualities. Personal feelings, intuitions, experiences, were not a source of knowledge. Knowledge existed "outside"- immutable, unchangeable- residing within the great Laws of Nature. Knowledge could be discovered, but not created (Doll 1993, 32).

The basis supporting this approach is a modern view of science, which is associated with a removal from nature.

Therefore, adopting a technical approach of education removes the objects or data being studied, hence the knowledge, from the learner. This model of learning has been widely accepted due to its association with predictability, efficiency, adaptability, management and comfort. The

technical approach removes a student's life from the knowledge being learned in contrast to a grounded approach, which associates learning with sensibilities, feelings, thoughts, and imagination.

The function of grounded knowing, apprehends (or metaphorically "feels") the natural history in which events or occasions emerge and become (Oliver 1990, 65).

The association of senses thorough a grounded approach takes into account the social realities of learners as events and occasions are validated through the senses. Oliver states that,

we feel the many aspects of an occasion as they move into the unity of an event [and the] quality of knowing allows us to feel a connectedness and continuity with the complex natural and cultural relationships in which we are always enmeshed (Oliver 1990, 65).

This theory has a profound relationship to education. If both students and teachers find occasions for a shared experience, particularly through the medium of dialogue where realities are made explicit, learning becomes much more significant than mere absorption as discussed in the "banking method" (Freire 1970) of education.

Closed vs. Open System

Teaching through a postmodern, grounded approach assumes the function of an open paradigm. Doll (1993) recognizes

that,

until, now, the thermodynamic concept of an open system has not been explored for curriculum considerations (Doll 1993, 58).

Encouraging student voice in the classroom while attempting to maintain an educational vision is a foreign practice, unrecognized and unsupported by years of teaching through a modernist perspective. Nevertheless, addressing our paradigms through which we function, whether they be open or closed systems, is a necessary task:

The more we are aware of our basic paradigms, maps, or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others, and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view (Covey 1989, 29).

Incorporating student voice within the curriculum allows for the transformation of culture, a characteristic of an open system of education.

An open system of knowledge involves interaction and dialogue thereby creating knowledge rather than discovering knowledge existing outside of the individual. Through dialogue, an open system transforms individuals as realities are shared and appropriated. Most importantly, open conversations, and hence, knowledge, are ongoing; assumptions and prejudices are continually re-interpreted.

An open system rejects the rigid dichotomies of objective thought and subjective experience and attempts to find tension between equilibrium and disequilibrium,

therefore allowing education to be flexible instead of determinant. Through the social experiences of individuals, they are both subordinate to and embedded within curricular objectives. Subsequently, through an open system,

curriculum is not just a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, but is a vehicle for creating and re-creating ourselves and our culture (Doll 1993, 131).

On the contrary, a closed system represents a modern paradigm whereby there is a transference and concentration of a particular type of energy, but no spontaneous development or transference of energy. This is perhaps because there is only one source of energy in the classroom, the teacher. There exists pre-determined ends which are measured. With modern science being the foundation of thought, knowledge is closed, signifying the silencing of voices. There exists pre-selected courses, materials, and rules and little opportunity for new or divergent ideas. Narrative and dialogue are unnecessary because there is no need for a discovery of knowledge.

Problem-Posing Student Realities

Problem-posing, leading a critical dialogue in class, "offers all subject matter as historical products to be questioned rather than as universal wisdom to be accepted" (Shor 1992, 32). It also focuses on power relations within the institution of education, the standard principles of knowledge, and society at large. Through problem-posing, the teacher recognizes the diverse cultures and social

experiences of the learners and asks them to understand the curriculum in terms of their realities. Therefore, learners are not seen as beings with deficits that need to be filled, but rather individuals who use their minds and voices to create knowledge.

As a teacher, the practical application of problem-posing is encouraging a participatory class and examining subject matter from the students' point of view. Understanding and analyzing the assumptions and realities of learners is a starting point whereby teachers and learners can question each others' conception of knowledge. The students then need time and opportunities to reflect on their thinking process, thus creating Transformational Learning. Furthermore, engaging in problem-posing supports the process thought theories of Dewey and Whitehead whereby knowledge is created interactively, dialogically, and conversationally.

Problem-posing also acknowledges the multi-cultural voices present in California education. Shor (1992) asserts that,

problem-posing is also multi- cultural. . . . Student speech, community life, and perceptions are foundations of the curriculum. . . . Projects [are] developed from student culture by researching local issues and language in students' communities (Shor 1992, 46).

Using students' language of everyday life as part of the curriculum assures generative themes, knowledge produced from student culture.

Shor (1992) acknowledges that the process of problem-posing is as much an art as a science. Dialogue is unique in the sense that it is not standardized but rather, self-evolving and creative. In order to better understand the process of problem-posing, Shor (1992) offers steps to initiate problem-posing:

1. posing a problem: dialogue begins with posing a problem, based on the generative themes and language that concerns a population.
2. class dialogue: through language, students can share experiences, understandings, and interpretations of the issue being discussed.
3. reflection: after a problem is posed, students reflect on their understanding of it instead of passively absorbing the teacher's perspective. Reflection is the process that enables individuals to reaggregate "truth" and overcome their false perception of reality. Furthermore,

authentic liberation- the process of humanization- is not another deposit to be made into men. . . . Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it (Freire 1970, 60).

Problem-posing characterizes a liberating form of education embedded within acts of cognition as opposed to a transference of information. Authority is on the side of freedom whereby the teacher takes on the role of learner as he or she attempts to understand student reality and cultural

phenomenons existent in the classroom. Freire says, "problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming" (Freire 1970, 65) which denies that man is isolated, independent, and unattached to the world. Since people do not exist apart from the world, the movement of problem-posing must begin with the human-world relationship, specifically dialogue.

The Sociology of Knowledge

Problem-posing and thus, knowledge, may also be understood through a "sociology of knowledge", a term developed by Schutz, Berger, and Luckman (as described in Bowers 1987). Bowers description of the sociology of knowledge explained that,

the social origins of our patterns of thinking...[which] puts a renewed emphasis on understanding our beliefs and the language systems that both transmit and sustain these beliefs (Bowers 1987, 3).

Unconsciously, individuals are controlled by their cultural traditions but the sociology of knowledge attempts to question and re-define those realities.

Education allows the opportunity to examine the taken-for-granted beliefs of individuals, particularly through addressing cultural practices. Furthermore,

the sociology of knowledge provides the concepts for making the connection between the more traditional content of the curriculum, which provides exposure to the cultural heritage, and the phenomenological culture of the student (Bowers 1987, 86).

Introducing an educational vision foreign to students requires an understanding of their phenomenological culture (those aspects of a student's life pertinent to the curriculum).

Bowers (1987) offers three principles for problem-posing and creating a sociology of knowledge. The first principle is utilizing students' phenomenological culture, meaning to relate classroom discussion to the students' experience. This allows students to think about their realities under the umbrella of discussion. Furthermore, by validating the students' phenomenological world, the teacher is saying, in effect, that the students' reality is significant.

The second principle is the use of historical perspective to deobjectify knowledge. Since the sociology of knowledge analyzes how language reifies realities, by losing sight of human authorship of what is being communicated, this principle seeks to analyze student language and how students have been socialized to objectify knowledge. In organizing the curriculum, the teacher needs to focus on the objectified knowledge in question. Therefore,

an awareness of how things were in the past and their continuity in the present, alters the view that we are self-formed and self-governing individuals (Bowers 1987, 91).

Finally, the third principle seeks to incorporate a cross-cultural perspective within curriculum. A

cross-cultural comparison introduces students to another insight of the sociology of knowledge, particularly that there exists multiple realities. These multiple realities expand ways of thinking about social experience, especially in relation to curriculum. Students also may begin to "understand how the acquisition of culture can both constrain and expand thought" (Bowers 1987, 95). This understanding allows students to move from a technical to an emancipatory knowledge constitutive interest, a form of liberation.

**Moving towards a more liberating form of pedagogy:
practical-emancipatory knowledge**

In order to understand what drives human interest to develop knowledge, Habermas (1971) asserts that different kinds of knowledge are shaped by the human interests they serve. These 'knowledge constitutive interests' guide the way knowledge is created in different human activities. The *technical* interest determines cause-effect relationships and learning through task-oriented problem solving technique. The *practical* interest is learning to understand the meaning of others while making ourselves comprehensible; it is communicative learning which allows an individual to be communicatively competent. Finally, the *emancipatory* interest is what impels us to identify and challenge existing assumptions. These three knowledge constitutive interests provides an understanding of how teachers may incorporate

student voice in the curriculum and allow for a re-definition of reality.

Mezirow (1991) states that knowledge constitutive interests,

are grounded in our relationships to the environment, other people, and power . . . because [they have their] own distinctive categories for interpreting experience, methods for discovering knowledge, and methods for validating assertions pertaining to it (Mezirow 1991, 72).

Therefore, the first two, technical and practical, represent distinct learning domains. While the technical interest seeks to control and manipulate the environment through instrumental learning, the practical interest seeks to understand others through communicative learning.

The technical interest is the interest of human beings in acquiring knowledge that will facilitate their technical control over natural objects. This interest usually takes the form of scientific knowledge. The technical interest combines a law or generalization with a set of variables and fixed conditions under which it applies to result in a variable condition controlled by the person applying the knowledge to change. For example,

pull a lever with muscle power to unlatch the trap door of the gallows and allow the law of gravity to "act" on the body of the condemned person until Newton's equal and opposite reaction occur at the end of the rope (Young 1990, 33).

As an extension to the human world, action is the manipulation of changeable or variable conditions.

Instrumental action always involves predictions about observable events, either physical or social, which can be proven either correct or incorrect. One seeks to determine a cause-effect relationship and learning occurs through task-oriented problem solving. Instrumental learning involves making a prediction about observable things or events and a proposition may be established as "truth" due to the correctness of the analyses.

In relation to education, the modern era of curriculum represents a mathematical, scientific, and mechanical cosmology driven by the technical interest. Science became the basis of intellectual and social thought in the modern paradigm and which characterized the traditional curriculum. "Controlling" nature revolutionized education as the goals of a machine-oriented curriculum were separated from the instructional process. Carr and Kemmis state that,

the technical interest has produced much of the knowledge necessary for modern industry and production processes, and that this knowledge will remain necessary if humankind is to enjoy the material rewards of production (Carr and Kemmis 1986, 135).

Due to the fact that so many schools, today, follow a modernist paradigm of education, students are too often encouraged to develop the technical interest of controlled, manipulative learning instead of transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) asserts that the technical interest "concerns the way we control and manipulate our environment, including other people" (Mezirow 1991, 73). Problem-posing attempts to

discourage the technical interests in hope of generating a practical interest which can lead to liberation of an oppressive reality.

In the simplest sense of the term, the practical interest pursues the goal of understanding and being understood. Within the practical interest,

one applies hermeneutic knowledge [and] the result is not a determinate, physically caused result, but a state of understanding of a message or a text (Young 1990, 33).

Learning is communicative as we attempt to understand what others mean and make ourselves comprehensible as we attempt to share ideas through speech, expression, and the various other forms of communication. The result is understanding and clarifying conditions for meaningful communication and dialogue. This type of interpretive understanding informs individuals and guides their practical judgment.

A major difference between the technical and practical interest is that the communicative domain does not have technical control and manipulation as their aim. Rather,

their aim is the clarification of conditions for communication and "intersubjectivity", the process of relating to another as a psychological subject rather than as an object to be controlled and manipulated (Mezirow 1991, 79).

The purposeful aims of the practical interest is for the learner to actively negotiate his or her own way through a series of specific encounters by using language and expression and anticipating the actions of others. These

aims are governed by social norms as opposed to cause-effect relationships.

The first two knowledge constitutive interests, the technical and practical, are characterized by accepting the given form of the human world. The unique aspect of the emancipatory knowledge constitutive interest is the possibility of change and thus, transcendence. An emancipatory interest involves a critical methodology whereby existing assumptions, beliefs, and modes of existence are modified upon reflection. The medium of this transcendence is dialogue obtainable through the practical interest. The outcome, as stated above, is emancipation from the forces which limit our understanding of human perspective.

The sociology of knowledge reveals that self-reflection and self-understanding may be distorted or influenced by social factors. True self-reflective understanding, mediated by dialogue, may provide a revelation of frustrating conditions and suggest some sort of action that is required if the source of frustration is to be eliminated. As Freire (1970) states, self-emancipation can only occur when an oppressed individual can understand how aims and purposes may have become distorted or repressed through various socializing conditions. It is only when the realization has been made that the oppressed have the ability to pursue their rational goals. Furthermore, the emancipatory interest as

part of critical theory,

is not "critical" simply in the sense of voicing disapproval of contemporary social arrangements, but in the sense that it attempts to distill the historical processes which have caused subjective meanings to become systematically distorted (Mezirow, 1991, 137).

Therefore, the emancipatory interest is what impels us, through reflection, to identify and challenge existing paradigms. As humans reflect upon the way our history and experiences have shaped the way we see ourselves, our assumptions about learning, and the world around us, an enlightenment may occur. We may see how socializing conditions of various kinds influence existing paradigms, often in a repressive manner.

Beside the possibility of transcendence, the emancipatory interest differs from the other interests in distinct ways. The technical interest is concerned with the objective world while the practical interest is concerned with social relationships. The emancipatory interest is interested in "critical self-reflection [as] appraisive rather than prescriptive or designative" (Mezirow, 1991, 87). At the heart of the emancipatory interest lies the redefinition of a given human world.

Chaos Theory and Transformational Learning

The idea of a post-modern curriculum incorporating dialogue promotes a theory of chaos within the curriculum. In the modern era, Newton, among other scientists, searched

for order, and chaos was not necessary or important for creation. Rather, it was viewed as a formless void; the "dark side". Therefore, there was a negative connotation attached to chaos in modern thought. A post-modern paradigm views chaos as an opportunity for transformation.

A post-modern view of chaos theory states that patterns emerge in abstract relationships and that individual units do not matter. The theory attempts to make order and sense out of patterns which are not simple nor can be observed by the naked eye. In sum, "deep within chaos itself there is universal structure" (Doll 1993, 93). Doll relates chaos theory to a post-modern perspective by encouraging the reader to accept and practice chaos theory in terms of curriculum.

The practice of dialogue and sharing realities in order to analyze social experiences may be viewed a form of chaos. As individuals share their realities through language, some sort of order or sense will take place. This is because individuals are not isolated entities but rather beings who interact and make sense of the environment through self-organization, whether it be chaotic or sequential. The difference between linear and chaotic curriculum is that within chaotic curriculum, the learner develops knowledge through self-reflection and interaction with curriculum ideas. Therefore, a creative transformation of the mind is possible.

If structure, sense, and meaning are possible in an environment of chaos, then there exists the possibility of understanding how can educators both justify student voice based on their social experiences and challenge at the same time those aspects of that voice which oppose our educational vision. The environment of chaos which allows this prospect is seen through the Transformational Learning Model (described by Harper and Nelson, unpublished paper 2000). In describing this model they state, "we must be engaged in a critical community of conversation because we are locked into our own world view via culture, language, historical narrative" (Harper and Nelson 2000, 1).

At the center of the Transformational Learning model exists a critical community of conversation, individuals sharing their realities based on various socialization factors. This is the unexamined "is" definition of reality. As ideas are transferred, individuals follow a spiral process.

Through discussion, participants enter a "wallowing stage" whereby events or texts are challenged or contradicted, resulting in a perturbation. The "grappling stage" identifies the examination of taken-for-granted beliefs where one grapples with contradictions and perturbations. "Real" self-reflection is possible as individuals distance themselves from their internal reality.

Due to self-reflection, participants are transformed by new understandings which have been reaggregated and reappropriated. The "is" reality is transformed when one can see an issue or idea from a new perspective. The Transformational Learning Model may allow student voices to be validated in the classroom, even when those voices oppose educational ideology. Through a critical community of conversation, the "is" reality of students and educators may be challenged and understood by the community of learners seeking to create an intellectual environment. The process of transforming reality in Jackson Elementary School is examined more closely in chapters three and four.

CHAPTER THREE

PROBLEM-POSING AS THE VEHICLE OF TRANSFORMING STUDENT CULTURE

When educators offer problem-posing, democratic dialogue in the classroom, they challenge socialization into myths, values, and relations of the dominant culture (Shor 1992, 117).

This chapter focuses on the investigation process between myself and co-researcher participants on promoting student voice in the curriculum while supporting a positive learning environment. A project of possibility which incorporates a students' reality in the classroom requires not only dialogue, but the language to describe one's history, language, and traditions. Furthermore, addressing student concerns "enable[s] those who have been marginalized economically and culturally to claim in both respects a status as full participating members of a community" (Simon 1989, 138). This possibility can only be realized when dialogue is directed towards Transformational Learning.

Critical Qualitative Methodology

The approach by which I conduct my research study is largely dependent on the lenses by which I view the world. A qualitative approach assumes that the world is complex,

dynamic, and socially constructed. Each individual creates his or her unique reality based on personal experiences. Therefore, a qualitative study seeks to understand a variety of perspectives as opposed to generalizing social phenomenons.

Most importantly, the interactions between the researcher and research participants are the main instrument of study. It is only when the researcher questions, observes, and interacts with research participants that the researcher can "understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne 1999, 5). Those social constructions become the basis of data analysis.

A critical qualitative approach refers to the unveiling of practices that limit human justice through various social experiences. This involves the investigation of distorted false consciousness due to unequal hierarchy of powers, specifically the institution of schooling as analyzed in this study. Finally, a critical approach includes the "study participants as co-researchers who combine investigation, education, and action" (Glesne 1999, 12) as agents of change. Dialogue was the main instrument by which I hoped to promote change.

The Student Voice

Student voice may be referred to as an active attempt between teachers and students to engage in dialogue. Simon

(1989) asserts that the representative voice of education usually belongs to white, male, middle and upper class individuals to the exclusion of those economically and socially disadvantaged. This poses a problem for the majority of California public school students, "with white student enrollment declining from almost 75% to 39% of the total K-12 population in the last thirty years" (EdSource 1998, 2). Furthermore, "in 1996, five out of twenty California children were below the poverty line as defined by the US Census Bureau" (EdSource 1998, 2). Therefore, educators must constantly question whose representative voice educational ideology delineates.

Knowledge is not neutral. Rather, knowledge is defined by those who have the voice of authority. Giroux and McLaren (in Simon 1989) state:

Both student and teacher must develop an understanding of how both "local" and "official" knowledge gets produced, sustained, and legitimated. This further suggests that teachers need to develop pedagogical practices that link student experiences with those aspects of community life that inform and sustain such experiences... In this way, the concept of voice can provide a basic organizing principle around which teachers can both develop a relationship to student experiences, and also create a forum for examining broader school and community issues (Simon 1989, 143).

In order for Transformational Learning to occur, students can not be "deposited" knowledge. Rather they need to express their voices in order to re-consider broader social and community issues.

So the question remains whether to let students voice their cultural realities that might negate educational convictions or impose an educational vision with which students may have very little experience understanding. Simon (1989) answers this dilemma by proposing counterdiscourse "which provides the possibility for students to understand who they are in ways that are different from identities informed by the dominant culture" (Simon 1989, 143). Counterdiscourse allows for multiple student voices that may interrogate each other over the interpretation of experience, meaning, and possible versions of "self". Furthermore, identities are re-defined through the process of problem-posing.

Problem-Posing through Dialogue

Dialogue may be defined as "a conversational interaction directed intentionally towards teaching and learning" (Burbules 1993, x). It is what creates the shared reality between agents of a particular social group, including the society of education. Social reality is shared, sustained, and continuously negotiated through the process of dialogue. Most importantly, dialogue is what enables an individual to develop a sense of reality. Language is what creates culture: the symbols and codes are "powerful determinants of what the individual will be able to think and communicate" (Bowers 1987, 37).

Dialogue inevitably socializes individuals and creates objective realities. Bowers continuously emphasizes the idea that through a process of socialization, "the individual is often unaware of what is being learned" (Bowers 1987, 33) and may develop a false consciousness, cultural unconsciousness, or adhere to a taken-for-granted reality. However, dialogue provides the opportunity to "discover and [gain] new understanding, which stands to improve the knowledge, insight, [and] sensitivity of its participants" (Burbules 1993, 8) thus, also acting as an agent of socialization.

In a dialogic classroom, participants are able to express themselves clearly to others while communicating a sense of identity. The process tends toward a decentered and nonauthoritarian view of learning because knowledge is created among the participants. Finally, in authentic dialogic encounters, teachers do not impose changes upon students. Rather, they change themselves: they construct their own understandings, they change their minds, they decide on alternative courses of action, they redefine their priorities, and so on (Burbules 1993, 10).

If knowledge is to be created by learners, dialogue which capitalizes on their phenomenological culture, must be incorporated within the process.

The School Site and Student Population

The site at which myself and co-researchers investigated student voice in the curriculum was Jackson Elementary School on the east side of the Santa Clara Valley in San Jose, California. Jackson Year Round School is the second newest of thirteen schools in the East San Jose School District,

opening in 1990. Jackson is a K-6 school with a faculty of 35 teachers.

The total student population at Jackson is approximately 830 students. The school serves primarily low-middle class students, 46% Hispanic, 27% Asian, 17% Filipino, 6% Caucasian, and less than 1% Pacific Islander and American Indian. The mission statement of the school is that all students are successful, lifelong learners who will compete globally and contribute as inspired leaders to the community.

The study was researched from January 1999 through August 1999. I was introduced to Jackson School in October 1998 as a sixth grade part-time student teacher. During the first few months in sixth grade, I learned about the student communities, families, interests, and culture. In January, I returned to sixth grade for full-time student teaching and had the opportunity to observe the relationship between student culture, voice, and educational ideology.

History of the Study

In May 1999, upon completion of student teaching, I was hired on a partial contract to teach second grade for the remaining school months of May and June. During that time in second grade, I conducted a pilot interview as described in chapter one. The WWF culture was powerful in the second grade yet ignored by administrative authority. For this reason, I attempted to problem-pose the social aspects of

culture experienced by my participants while electronically tape recording the conversations.

The culture represented in the sixth grade classroom contradicted the ideals of educational well-being. Through conversational exchanges, I learned that students were exposed and expressing interest in gang activity, experimented with alcohol and smoking, and had numerous encounters with physical aggression. Most students were self-managed as many had parents that worked long hours in the evenings.

Due to the fact that Jackson was a year-round school, these students had grown up and been through the school system together. Both the students and my mentor teacher informed me that they had the reputation at school as being the "bad" class. In 5th grade, they had three different teachers due to the fact that the first two teachers quit after only a few months. Their reputation was common knowledge amongst the faculty and students.

One incident in particular, sparked my interest in this project. One day in March 1999, I arrived to a quiet and somber class in the morning. My mentor teacher appeared quite distracted and upset, yet I did not have time in the morning to inquire the reason. Before recess, an administrator entered the classroom. She raised the tone in her voice to a shrill, almost terrifying tone, and told the class that their actions the previous day were unacceptable,

consequential, and revolting. She proceeded to threaten the class by stating that she had her eyes on them and they would start to lose privileges such as the sixth grade dance, graduation, science camp, etc., if there were any more problems. As students raised their hands to speak, she hollered "Put your hands down!", "I don't want to hear it!", and "Wipe that stupid grin off your face!"

I learned later that a large group of our sixth graders initiated a fight after school the previous day by throwing food, amongst other things, towards a group of fifth graders they disliked. A few hits and many offensive words were exchanged just outside the school property. The consequences were assertive discipline and silenced voices.

The Project

In order to investigate how to promote student voice in the classroom when those voices may oppose educational ideology, I asked ten former sixth graders from my student teaching class to participate in a series of conversational interviews from June 1999 through August 1999. Since I was to begin these interviews after my partial contract had expired and the students graduated the school, I sought approval to use the conference room at Jackson School once a week during the summer, which was approved. This research was intended to investigate when or if teachers need to initiate regulation for a positive learning environment when students' voices are encouraged or whether a positive learning

environment can be accomplished through dialogue and counterdialogue.

Based on the learning experiences from the pilot study, two conditions were crucial for this study. First, authentic dialogue cannot be pre-planned through biased questioning. The conversations need to evolve based on student interests as opposed to the researcher's concerns. The researcher may have an agenda but cannot force the agenda with inauthentic dialogue. Second, authentic dialogue cannot be forced under limited time constraints. There needs to exist a comfortable, relaxed, flexible environment for authentic dialogue.

Data Collection Methods

For approximately seven weeks, I met with nine former sixth grade students for an hour and a half per week. During these meetings, I electronically tape recorded our dialogues and took field notes on observations, body language, and comments not recorded on tape.

Observation

Observations were informally recorded in journal notes from January 1999 through August 1999. While student teaching in the sixth grade class, I recorded observations of student culture and student voice in the classroom. I also recorded audible silences, issues that confront the students yet are ignored in class, in my journal notes. Although

observations are subjective, interpretation is part of the qualitative research method.

Conversational Interviews

Dialogue amongst the students and myself was the main instrument of data collection for this study. Problem-posing requires dialogue which allows students to express their reality through language and experience the realities of others engaged in the dialogic interaction. The interview questions were open ended and later transcribed.

Research Participants

Research participants were selected based on different criteria. First, my mentor teacher and I discussed the student population that lived within walking distance of the research site, Jackson School. From that group, we discussed the cultural, familial, and social backgrounds of the students and chose ten individuals that had varied experiences. From the ten that were asked to volunteer in the project, nine accepted.

The students that participated in the study had different backgrounds, both ethnically, culturally, socially, and academically. Although each individual is unique and different, the following generalizations apply to the research group. Five females and four males were participants. Seven of the students were Filipino while the other two were Vietnamese. Four of the students expressed strong family support and were under the guidance and

surveillance of their guardians. The other five students had little contact with their guardians during the week and were self-sufficient. Three of the students had shy, quiet personalities while the other six were outgoing and exuberant. Five of the students performed at or above grade level, while the other four performed below grade level standards.

Interview Questions

The interview questions focused on the experience and behaviors of the students, their opinions, values, feelings, and knowledge of certain issues. The questions were open ended and often, unplanned, based on student responses.

Generally, the interview focused on three central themes:

1. How do students understand the relationship between their community/cultural realities and the school curriculum?
2. What were the memories, thoughts, and feelings of their experiences at Jackson School and how do they envision their next phase of schooling at Middle School?
3. How does the institution of schooling correlate to student life experiences and goals for their future?

About the Researcher

The researcher received her undergraduate education at University of California, Los Angeles, in sociology. She holds a Multiple-Subject CLAD emphasis teaching credential and is pursuing a Masters degree in Education from San Jose State University. She currently teaches first grade at

Ponderosa Elementary School in South San Francisco Unified
School District.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIALIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION THROUGH DIALOGUE

Education as the practice of freedom- as opposed to education as the practice of domination- denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from the people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. (Freire 1970, 62).

Introduction

The intention of this research was to provide an understanding of the student realities in the former sixth grade class at Jackson Elementary School and whether these realities were acknowledged, accepted, or incorporated in the school curriculum. Furthermore, the process of problem-posing was practiced within the data collection process in order to learn how student realities may be instituted into the curriculum even when those realities oppose educational ideology. The data collected consisted mostly of conversational interviews with nine former sixth grade students from Jackson, observational field notes, and

personal reflection. These interviews and field notes were later transcribed and analyzed for emerging patterns.

Due to the fact that I am neither from nor have a thorough understanding of the culture represented by the students at Jackson, I started my research by engaging in dialogue with the students in order for them to name their world (Freire 1970). Freire states that "dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire 1970, 69).

The human world is both created and transformed by those who give language to name the world. To be human is to create a world as opposed to be silenced by the world. Historically, the naming of the world has been defined by the elite, or educationally, school administrators. Therefore, it was important for the project to have the research participants name their world. "Naming" allows the researcher to examine how socialization contributes to the conceptual maps which direct student behavior.

I used Burbules' theory of dialogue as inquiry (1993) in order to engage in a dialogical relationship with my research participants. Dialogue as inquiry follows an inclusive, convergent process which,

foster[s] a spirit of tolerance and respect for a range of views, with the intention of addressing some sort of question or problem, and with the hope that these differences can be reconciled into at least partial and provisional commonalties (Burbules 1993, 118).

Inquiry was the basis of this project and from the conversational interviews with the students, three themes emerged.

The first theme that emerged was that the students encountered basic elements of socialization which contributed to the construction of the students' reality and the sociology of knowledge. As Bowers explains,

The sociology of knowledge provides . . . the conceptual means for understanding the student's world of experience, including why the student is often unaware of many cultural messages that are being learned at a tacit level. The sociology of knowledge, with its emphasis on communication and social actors, helps to see the social environment as a source of reinforcement, which is the major concern of the behaviorists; [the theory] does not separate behavior from the conceptual and experience from its linguistic and cultural roots (Bowers 1987, 50).

In order to pose how or why student experiences should be incorporated within the curriculum, I had to understand the student experiences of my research participants and how their realities are constantly evolving, both inside of class and out. The theory of sociology poses that basic elements of socialization contribute to the construction of reality and that the knowledge of my participants matured through their social experiences.

The second theme that emerged was that the student's experiences at Jackson was characterized by an antialogical relationship with administrators. Freire (1970) states that oppressed individuals often encounter *prescription*. The consciousness of oppressed individual is prescribed into that

of the oppressor, meaning that the oppressor imposes his or her choices upon the oppressed. Throughout data collection, the prescriptive movement was demonstrated through anti-dialogical impediments.

The third theme that emerged was that through the process of problem-posing, the conflict between representing student realities in the classroom that contradict educational convictions both legitimate student reality and offers the possibility of transforming taken for granted beliefs. As Freire (1970) states, "problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. . . . [It] strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (Freire 1970, 62). It is through the act of problem-posing that student realities may be re-negotiated.

The Socialization of the Research Participants

Curriculum materials often deny the possibility of genuine inquiry by predetermining questions and answers. The sociology of knowledge seeks to include the student's phenomenological culture as an important reference point in the educational process (Bowers 1987, 71). Therefore, the starting point for this project was to investigate, through dialogue, the multiple realities existent between the research participants.

In order to explore the social lives of the students, we participated in a thematic investigation (Freire 1970). Meaningful themes were expressed by the students which

allowed me to learn about their social lives, motives, objectives, and aspirations. To understand these themes is "to understand both the people who embody them and the reality to which they refer" (Freire 1970, 88). The awareness of self and reality was the starting point of my investigation in order to understand how to incorporate student culture with the educational process.

Interaction with Significant Others

Bowers (1987) states that one of the basic elements of socialization is that,

the individual's self-concept is constituted through interaction with significant others: the individual not only acquires the socially shared knowledge but also an understanding of who he/she is in relation to it (Bowers 1987, 40).

Due to the fact that the research participants ranged from ages twelve to thirteen, it was important for me to find out who was significant in socializing the student's realities. The pre-teen years signify a seeking of identity and the significant people in their lives indicate what influences shape their reality.

As I looked back through my student teaching observation notes, I indicated on March 15, 1999,

Teaching social studies was so hard today. There was so much noise and goofing around which really upset me. Sometimes the kids seem so engaged in the lessons of The Great Depression and the relevance of the issues to their own lives. Other times it seems as though there are no cognitive connections. I had a long talk with Amy (my mentor teacher) after school and I learned a little more about the social dynamics of sixth graders. She said

they're in the struggle between holding on to their childhood, characterized by immature behavior, and trying to be mature.

The dichotomy between retaining their childhood and maturing is strongly influenced by the significant people in their lives. Throughout our conversations, the groups which were identified as influential forces were their friends, family, and other role models.

The research participants were close to finishing their education at Jackson Elementary School in order to go to Junior High so one of my first questions was to inquire what was their fondest memory from Jackson Elementary School. The responses were:

S: My favorite memory at Jackson was hanging out with my friends because, um, like, that's the time we can really talk and stuff. That's the time we can all be together. 'Cause on the weekends sometimes, or whenever we plan something, some of them are not there.

S: Uh, my favorite memory is the day I met my friends 'cause I don't know, we had lots of fun stuff. We did lots of fun stuff together.

S: The dance. Because, uh, all our friends were there and all that.

S: My favorite memories are, like, spending time with my friends because they're special to me.

Later in the interview, I asked the students how they chose their friends. They stated:

S: It's because of their attitude or personality.

A: So friends have to have a certain kind of attitude or personality?

S: Yeah.

A: How do you choose your friends?

S: If we have something in common, then we can talk about it and that's how you start liking them.

S: Usually you make one friend and they all have friends so you hang out with everyone there. Like you have similarities and stuff.

S: I just find people who are cool and stuff. Sometimes they like what I like... I don't know, I just know the people I hang out with are the right people for me.

S: I just choose my friends mostly by their personalities... if they're nice and all. They don't have to be just like me, listen to the same music and all, or act like me, or use slang words, it's just their personalities.

S: I like, like, funny people. And they don't have no attitudes and all that.

S: Just people that are different. I like people that are different so it won't always be boring and we talk about the same things all the time, like different opinions and stuff like that.

The common theme that self-concept is socially acquired, specifically through communication and shared realities, emerged in this conversational exchange. Furthermore, friendship contributed to the development of self-concept because,

the individual, during the initial stages of socialization to the definitions and expectations of a new social situation, is in a dependency relationship where very few of the values and the and assumptions that form the basis of judgment are clarified or subject to any genuine negotiations process (Bowers 1987, 41).

The lack of negotiation may be due to the fact that adolescents are continually in the process of defining their self.

Bowers says that "the normal individual's self-concept reflects the range of social interaction" (Bowers 1987, 41), and our conversations naturally led to the topic of role models as significant social influences. In one conversational exchange, a student stated:

S: I like going out to parties. The parties I go to are mostly fourteen year olds.

A: Tell me about these parties... what are parties like for people your age?

S: The parties are like, cool, like they have D.J.'s and stuff.

S: Sometimes they're not even for an occasion- it's just like a get together kind of thing.

A: Is it usually an older person that puts on the parties or do people your age put on parties?

S: It's usually an older person.

A: So it's usually an older person that puts on the party?

S: Yeah, like when a teenager has a party, kids can get beer anytime.

A: So there's beer at the parties?

S: Yeah and gambling.

S: My uncle gives us beer!

S: One time, Thomas was at a party and he drank a wine cooler.

Students continued to state that much of their social time spent outside of school is with persons older than themselves. Through an exchange of questions and personal stories, students indicated that they interacted with older

persons due to the friendships and relationships of older family members, whether siblings or cousins, and neighbors.

I asked them,

A: What do you think of your older friends?

S: They're good influence.

A: Do you feel like they're role models?

S: Yeah, yeah, that's how we act now.

S: Yeah, we'd be acting like, "That's sooooo cool!", if we didn't have older sisters, acting crazy. But we don't act like that. We'd say, "Oh, do you want to come to my house?" instead of "my crib."

A: Let's say you were the oldest of your families, without cousins or siblings, how do you think your lives would be different?

S: (in a sarcastic tone) We'd be like this, "What's up, dude?"

The fact that students had older siblings and cousins as role models prompted questions about their families. Eight out of the nine participants indicated that they rarely see their parents during the weekdays. Many parents worked night shifts, twelve hour days, or were simply absent from the students' lives. One student said, "They just don't care". The fact that very little parental interaction is present in the lives of the students, allows the students to see teenage family members as role models and influential factors for developing their own self-concept.

Experiencing the Social World as Taken-for-Granted

Throughout the process of communication and interaction with significant others, individuals begin to make sense of

everyday life in order to develop their self-concept.

Therefore,

much of the social world of everyday life is learned and experienced by the individual as the natural, even inevitable order of reality. This natural attitude toward the everyday world is experienced as taken-for-granted (Bowers 1987,39).

The process of socialization is experienced by the individual as the taken-for-granted reality of everyday life.

Individuals cannot imagine what is not experienced without exposure to an alternate reality. Therefore, reality, whether conforming to educational norms or not, just is in the lives of individuals. The conversational interviews with the students about their personal lives were colored with stories of violence. While discussing the community and neighborhoods surrounding Jackson, most students passed the question or hesitated before speaking. One student stated that she gets tired of all the fights. I expanded on this notion by asking,

A: Who fights? Expand on this. I taught here for awhile but really don't know too much about the community. Who fights? What kinds of things do you see?

S: I don't really see alot of things because I stay inside but, like, mostly the kids our age...

A: The kids your age fight?

S: Uh-huh. (long pause and silence)

A: Raise your hands if you've ever had an experience with fighting. (all nine participants raise their hands)

S: Are you going to tell on us?

A: No, I just want to learn more about your lives. She brought up the issue, why do you think people your age, twelve, thirteen, what are the reasons people get into fights? Why do fights start? (long pause) Think about your own experiences. What are some reasons a fight started?

S: When someone said we was acting all bad.

A: So someone thought you had an attitude?

S: Yeah, so they stepped up to me and I walked away.

This conversational exchange was the first in our interviews when students brought up the issue of violence in the community. The long pauses and fear of authority in the dialogical exchange indicated that there was either confusion or hesitation on behalf of the students for them to share this aspect of their reality. Perhaps their fear of authority stemmed from the fact that many of the students had been in the same conference room at Jackson where we conducted our interviews due to disciplinary action taken by the Jackson staff.

A: Why were you guys in this conference room?

S: For the harassment thing. . . . Like after school, we stay at the corner and the people we have problems with, they always cuss at us. We had a plan to throw food at them 'cause they threw oranges at us and we didn't do nothing to them. Remember that day we had a party, we took the donuts, the drinks, and we threw food at them. They told on us the next day.

A: So you threw food but they didn't?

S: Yeah, they did. They threw oranges and we threw other stuff. We also had eggs.

A: Did you throw the eggs at them?

S: No, we had them ready, though.

Throughout our thematic investigation of aggression and when the students were reassured I wasn't going to "tell on them", they freely began to share their stories relating to violence. Students commented on violent incidents that stemmed from unwanted looks and gestures, sarcastic tones when speaking, competitiveness, and negative reactions to another student's self-concept. In one exchange, the students shared their experiences with violence in the community:

A: What's your experience with violence in the community?

S: It always starts out with a problem, like no one's going to come up to you and say, "I want to fight you"; they have to have a reason.

A: What are some of those reasons? We heard him say attitude was a problem and Thomas told the story of competitiveness.

S: It's mostly behavior. If they don't like you, they're going to start something with you. Even if you have fun with them, you know, they're still going to come up to you. There's always more than three people involved or like, yeah. And there's always got to be back up.

After we began the exploration of violence in the community, the students were eager to share their stories and reacted to others' experiences with laughter and jeering. One student, who was frequently disciplined for violent behavior, shared one of her experiences with violence which resulted in suspension:

S: It's because, like, I was tying my hair and then, it was like after school, and I accidentally kicked his

ball. It's true, I accidentally kicked his ball. And he got all butt hurt.

A: What does that mean?

S: It got him all mad and I said sorry but he cussed at me, I was like whatever, right?! And then I turned around and he pulled my hair.

A: He pulled your hair?

S: Mmmhmm. Like he pulled it so hard it fell to the ground. So it got a little too far and I gave him a black eye.

A: So you turned around and whacked him?

S: (laughter) Um, he got two black eyes and his nose started bleeding and something happened to his finger.

A: So after you hit him, did he do anything to you in return?

S: It was like a rumble.

A: What did he do?

S: We started punching each other and his nails are long, so he scratched me. And, I don't know, it always ends, like, I don't know, sometimes crying.

Edward Hall (as discussed by Bowers 1987) termed the "cultural unconsciousness" as the recipe knowledge that governs our behavior. Bowers asserts that,

the idea of the "cultural unconscious" points to the fact that socialization involves a tacit form of learning (and teaching) of many of the conventions that govern an individual's beliefs and behavior. When beliefs and social definitions are communicated as taken-for-granted, they are often experienced by the individual undergoing socialization as being nonproblematic, which assures that they will likely be incorporated into the individual's frame of reference at the same tacit level of awareness (Bowers 1987, 39-40).

Violence was part of this girl's 'cultural unconsciousness', as with many of the research participants, which defines this

taken-for-granted reality as nonproblematic. In another conversational exchange, the student who shared her story was not present at the time. One of the other participants stated,

S: When (she) gets mad, then she starts to yell and she punches stuff. She really gets violent; she hits her parents and grandparents when she gets mad.

Later that week, as we discussed family, the girl who shared her story told us about her brother:

S: He was threatening to kill my mom.

A: How old is your brother?

S: Twenty-six and he was throwing stuff all around.

A: So he threatens your mother?

S: He said, "One night, when you're all sleeping, I'm going to kill all you guys." He said it to my mom. And she said, "If you threaten me one more time, da, da, da" and he said, "Go ahead. What if I do threaten you one more time?" and she called the police.

Demonstrated through her own family's tendencies towards violence, the girl had been socialized to use aggressiveness to solve problems. Bowers states that,

as individuals internalize the taken-for-granted attitudes of others, a stock of knowledge is built up that serves as the recipes for defining and acting in different social situations (Bowers 1987, 39).

Since socialization is a continual process of re-defining reality based on communication and interaction with significant others, then taken-for-granted realities and behaviors become a domino effect. It is passed through

families, friendships, role models, communities, and inevitably becomes culture. Therein lies the question, how can educators incorporate student realities when those realities oppose educational ideology?

It is also important to note that at this point of my research with the former Jackson students, I began to recognize the violence present in their lives stemmed from both socialization, social inequalities, and thus, oppression. I was most interested in how their schooling dealt with these realities because according to my field notes and observations, the administration of Jackson did not attempt to understand or incorporate these realities in the curriculum.

In fact, Jackson took an opposite approach, incorporating a "zero tolerance" policy. This meant that if a student brought a weapon or engaged in a violent act, the immediate consequence is disciplinary action, no exceptions. The zero tolerance policy represented a rule at Jackson that sought to incorporate a technical solution for a social problem. This presented an "audible silence" (Bowers 1987), a collective silence within the educational institution due to either a lack of communication in articulating social issues or fear that arises of those issues, within the school. Bowers states that "when experience is taken for granted, there is no awareness of alternative definitions or values" (Bowers 1987, 63). Teachers and administrators

represent educated, mostly white, middle-class women and there is a specific social group with common social experiences represented amongst educators. These experiences become our collective taken-for-granted reality in which alternative lifestyles are not easily comprehensible. Furthermore, the curriculum in which students interact with should be sensitive to the social and individual experiences of the students.

Violence is a reality in many of the lives of the students but what is critical to recognize is that,

violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons- not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized (Freire 1970, 37).

This idea made me wonder whether the institution of schooling was the source of oppression due to the fact that students' reality was being ignored. Oppressors which instigate violence continually label the oppressed as different than themselves, "those kids", "troublemakers", "disrespectfuls", common labels attached to kids often heard in the lunch room. These issues led me to question the students about their own personal experiences with both administrators and educators at Jackson and a common theme of antidualogical action emerged.

Antidualogical Actions at Jackson School

Freire (1970) states that at the heart of oppression lies antidualogical action. This is because one decrees

ignorance upon another, which leads to authority, and the language to re-negotiate reality is unimportant because the ignorant are not capable. Furthermore,

the words of the (oppressor) come to be "true" words, which he imposes or attempts to impose on the others: the oppressed, whose words have been stolen from them. Those who steal the words of others develop a deep doubt in the abilities of the others and consider them incompetent. Each time they say their word of those whom they have forbidden to speak, they grow more accustomed to power and acquire a taste for guiding, ordering, commanding. They can no longer live without having someone to give orders to (Freire 1970, 115).

Throughout my interviews with the students, the theme of antialogue dominated their experiences at Jackson School. The theory of antialogue followed four general propositions of antialogical action.

Conquest of the Oppressed

Every act of antialogue requires a conqueror and someone or something which is conquered. The conqueror is both antialogical and oppressive, simultaneously.

Freire asserts that,

the antialogical individual, in his relations with others, aims at conquering them- increasingly and by every means, from the toughest to the most refined, from the most repressive to the most solicitous (Freire 1970, 119).

The common repressive element communicated by the students was the vocal tone taken by administrators when disciplining the students.

I questioned the student mentioned above, who was frequently disciplined for violence, about what happened

after the fight after school. She had met with the principal and vice- principal:

A: So do you think that schools deal with discipline effectively?

S: Even though they try to talk to us, we still do it again.

A: Why?

S: 'Cause they only give you a lecture, they only give you a lecture, that's it, a lecture and a paper.

A: Were you suspended?

S: Yeah, yeah. And people were telling them, like the witnesses that I didn't start it, that I was kicking him when he was on the ground for defense. And she (the principal) didn't believe that and every time I tried to talk, she always yells at us. When we fought with Mallory, we were in this conference room, she was yelling.

S: It was kids around the table and the principal, she was standing up and we were trying to tell her and she's all, "No, this is what I heard!" Then she said the "b" word! She really said it! She said that I said it. She was yelling at me mostly.

S: Whenever we try to say something, and like, how it started, she'd yell. She's all, "Mallory's been harassed" and tried to make us feel sorry for her and she always takes the side of the person crying. So when we try our side, she brings up, "Well, she's been harassed for a year", and every time she has to change the subject. We don't get to talk.

A: Why do you think she lectures?

S: We never get a chance to talk. Even if we try to pick up a pencil when she's yelling at us, like Daniel picked up his pencil, she went over there and she's all, "You put that pencil down!"

S: No, that was me, that was my jacket!

S: And Daniel's pencil!

S: I was like, trying to put on my jacket, and she said, "Don't put that on!" and then she pulled it. She pulled it and it hit my face.

S: She told us that we're the class that gets in trouble too much 'cause Connors and Jordan (other sixth grade teachers), they don't get in trouble as much as us.

S: And if we try to talk, she yells at us.

Later in the conversation, I asked the students whether this approach was effective and one boy responded, "It's not because, us, we've been suspended, even though we did it once, we'll do it again."

The sharing of experiences led me to ask the students how they feel about the administrators at Jackson. They responded in a manner that exemplified a relationship of oppression:

A: How do you feel about the administration at Jackson? The administration includes the principal, vice-principal, everyone that works in the office.

S: They're mean.

S: Yeah, they're mean.

S: They're mean. They get mad at us for no reason. If we get hurt, they go, "What did you do that for?" Someone ran me over and I fell and hurt my finger and the nurse said, "What did you do?" She told me to go home. She wanted me to walk home. Then I got in trouble by my mom.

S: When we get in trouble, and like, the principal talks to us, she doesn't give us a chance to talk.

These personal stories led me to wonder what is the goal of education. Is it to control individuals or educate them? The answer lies within how those with authority view the purpose of schooling. It seemed as though the education and

learning of social skills was lost in the process of conquering. Some of the students expressed the relationship between the oppressed (the students) and oppressors (the administration) through a hypothetical scenario:

A: Let's say you were out on the playground and someone approached you and insulted one of your family members, how would you handle that situation and why?

S: First I'd tell them I don't have a problem with them so I don't know why they're starting a problem with me. But to tell you the truth, I'd probably get out of control and fight them back.

A: So you know getting out of control is against the school rules, how do you decide whether to react to something like this or follow the school rules? What makes you decide whether to follow school rules or when to break them?

S: Whether the teacher is not looking!

S: When we have subs; they don't know much.

A: So it's whether someone is watching or not?

S: Mmmhmm.

S: If I'm really out of control and no one is watching, I don't know.

The education of social skills seemed to be lost in the game of surveillance and oppression.

The purpose of conquest not only attaches a stigma of ignorance to those being oppressed but also de-humanizes the oppressed so that they don't have the confidence to join together in an attempt to regain their humanity. Through two dialogical exchanges, the students expressed their feelings of rejection:

S: I feel mad sometimes because when we go to the office, they're like, they're mean. They go, "What do you want?"

S: I feel mad, too, 'cause whenever we tell the office that we didn't do it, they didn't believe us. They think that we still did it. They don't believe us.

A: You stated that you were yelled at when you got in trouble. Do you feel like that happens often?

S: Yeah.

S: Yes.

A: Why do you think that happens? Why do you think students aren't given a chance to talk?

S: 'Cause I guess if, like, when the students talk, they think we try to lie, I guess that's what they're thinking.

Freire (1970) states that the internalization of dehumanization is what keeps those in power alive while others are oppressed. The students language indicates that they feel untrusted and dishonest. Antidialogue supports the dehumanization process because,

there is no oppressive reality which is not at the same time necessarily antidialogical, just as there is no antidialogue in which the oppressors do not untiringly dedicate themselves to the constant conquest of the oppressed (Freire 1970, 121-122).

Divide and Rule the Oppressed

Earlier in the interviews, many students expressed the importance of their friendships. In fact when I asked the students what they value most in life, many students stated it was their friends. One boy said, "I care alot about my friends; my friends are my family." If the oppressive

minority seeks to oppress the majority through antialogue then,

it must divide (the majority) and keep it divided in order to remain in power. . . . Concept such as unity, organization, and struggle are immediately labeled as dangerous (Freire 1970, 122).

The oppressors cannot afford to have the oppressed unify for fear of losing power to the majority. It is when the majority affiliate and develop their collective conscious that they have the possibility of liberation. During our interviews, the students indicated the division of two separate groups- friends and teacher with class. In the first dialogue, there existed an administrative attempt to separate friends:

A: Do you think school recognizes what's important to you?

S: What do you mean?

A: Let's say that someone was trying to hurt James and you stepped in because you backed him up, do you think the school recognizes why you did that?

S: Nope, they wouldn't take that as an excuse.

S: They would just think you're trouble or a liar.

A: You don't think that they understand that you might be helping someone instead of causing trouble?

S: I don't think so because before, when we got into trouble, someone told the principal that she was just backing her friend up, they both still got in trouble. She'll say, "You have to choose your friends right."

S: Just like Elmer and Luke. This one time, when we were hanging on the corner, he left before it (the food fight) started. He got in the car and went home but the principal said she wanted everyone's name who was at the corner before it even started, so Elmer put his name

down. He told her he didn't do anything but she was mad and told him, "But you have to choose your friends right."

A: How do you feel about that statement?

S: It's insulting!

S: Yeah, it makes us sound like we're bad and our friends are bad, too!

S: When she says to choose our friends right, we like to be with each other and she thinks we're bad when we're with each other.

As we discussed the silenced voices during discipline, I asked:

A: Does the principal listen to your side of the story?

S: I think they (administrators) pick sides.

A: Who do you think they take sides with?

S: I think it's like, whoever is good most of the time, more of the time. Then they, like pick that person's side and they get mad at the other side.

The preservation of the oppressive state requires the division of individuals because "dividing in order to preserve the status quo . . . is necessarily a fundamental objective of the theory of antialogical action" (Freire 1970, 126).

The division between teacher and class was another aspect of oppression present at Jackson school. Towards the end of my student teaching career in the sixth grade, my mentor teacher, Mrs. Hennessey, told me that she had multiple warnings from the other teachers and administrators that her class was "the worst". Since Jackson is a year-round school,

the students generally stay with each other through each grade level due to the time frame of schooling.

It was stated to Mrs. Hennessey that she was taking on the most difficult group of students for the 1998-1999 sixth grade year. She had waited to tell me that so that I could make my own judgments and she expressed the disposition she felt for the labeling of the students. One student said,

S: I think the school's not fair sometimes because Mrs. Hennessey told us that story about, like that thing when the teachers said that our class had a bad reputation.

A: What was the story? What did she tell you?

S: She said that the other teachers told Mrs. Hennessey that, um, we had a bad reputation, like we talk alot. You know, we're loud and we are, but you know. And then she told us that at the end of the year and she said, she's all like, "I hear that every year. But then I don't care about it." She like, ignores it, or something.

S: And she told them she didn't want to hear any more of that while she teaches our class. And that's why they didn't give us anything, because, you know, I think they already know we're bad.

S: Our teacher told us that the principal said, and she wasn't trying to hurt our feelings, but she said, "You're going to have a tough year because this class never listens." Our teacher said before she even knew us, the other teachers told her all this stuff.

S: Our old teachers told Mrs. Hennessey, "You're going to have a hard time because you have the loudest class. You're going to have a hard time with these students." But she didn't.

Freire (1970) states that in order to preserve the status quo, it is necessary to divide the people yet keep their strategy hidden. One way to do that is keeping the classroom

teacher on the side of the administration. Therefore, teachers are convinced that

they are being "defended" against the demonic action of "marginals, rowdies, and enemies of God"... in order to divide and confuse the people, the destroyers call themselves builders, and accuse the true builders of being destructive (Freire 1970, 127).

That is the essence of divide and rule.

Manipulation of the Oppressed

Manipulation of the oppressed

is another dimension of the theory of antidiological action, and, like the strategy of division, is an instrument of conquest: the objective around which all the dimensions of the theory revolve (Freire 1970, 128).

By means of manipulation, the oppressors attempt to conform the masses to their objectives. Those who do not understand that socialization allows education to be an institution of authority can more easily be manipulated.

During our discussion, students said another disciplinary action taken by administrators was to threaten to cancel activities, even those that are educational, such as science camp. After the food fight, the principal entered our class and stated that if there were any more problems, privileges would be eliminated starting with the upcoming events which were science camp, then the sixth grade pizza party, and the dance. When I asked students what happens when a violent act takes place during school hours, one student responded,

S: They give you warnings and then you get citations or suspended and you're like, banned from the fun stuff, you

know, field trips and the contracts for parents to sign. And there's conferences, and they always have to call your parents. Like, the principal, she always gives us a lecture. She always has to yell.

I asked,

A: Do you think the way in which school has dealt with discipline, like taking away privileges works?

S: It doesn't work! No, it doesn't work.

A: Why do you think it does or doesn't work?

S: Like the citations- it's like nothing. It's like old, it's like a piece of paper.

A: What's the citation?

S: It's just a piece of paper that warns you and your parents have to sign it and you bring it back. If you get three, then that's a suspension.

A: So why is it not effective?

S: It's like, nothing.

S: It like says, only what you did.

These examples demonstrate how those with power use technical solutions, such as manipulation through banning privileges and citations, to conform the oppressed towards their personal objectives. The fact that an influential educational opportunity, such as science camp, was threatened to be taken away from the students indicates a lack of consideration for the whole being of the child. Control and conquest are at the heart of education.

Cultural Invasion of the Oppressed

The final characteristic of antidialogical action is cultural invasion which serves the purpose of conquest.

Cultural invasion refers to when,

the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression (Freire 1970, 33).

This was demonstrated countless times at Jackson whereby the school set regulations and guidelines for dress, language, and expression.

The purpose of having school uniforms curbs the expression of violence, propaganda, and gang relations at Jackson School. One student commented that the first thing she would change at Jackson, if she had the opportunity, was the school uniforms. She stated,

S: I would change the uniforms. We don't want to wear school uniforms. Free dress.

S: No uniforms, no uniforms, and no uniforms.

S: Our uniforms are blue, and there's a blue side and red side of gangs, but at Costa Verde Junior High, it's just khaki and white.

A: Does it bother you to wear blue?

S: Yeah.

A: Why?

S: There are gangs that don't like blue and it's just scary.

Jackson argues the merits of school uniforms as beneficial for those families who don't have money to buy clothes and it

puts the students at the same economic level. The merits are justifiable, but the community surrounding the school has gang activity, characterized by red and blue. Incorporating student reality within the school means learning about the community and those factors, specifically gangs, which might affect the safety of students wearing school uniforms. Furthermore, it denies the culture of gangs present in the area, and imposes their own sanctions for dress codes and colors.

Cultural invasion also states that "those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them" (Freire 190, 134). One student shared an experience of when her friend, Ashley, was disciplined by the vice-principal:

S: And she (the vice-principal) said, "Excuse me, Ashley, I don't like your attitude." She made Ashley cry. She said, "When you first stepped into this cafeteria, I knew you had an attitude just by the way you looked."

This language communicates the idea that a certain "look" is unacceptable, therefore invading culture.

Another student shared a story of when a group of her friends were disciplined by the RSP teacher:

S: She's all, she was looking at us and she's all, "I don't see how you girls can get into trouble- you guys have your hair fixed and you look all pretty and everything", so she said all the nice stuff and was looking at us and said all the bad stuff and was looking at them, the other girls.

Cultural invasion, which serves the purpose conquest and inevitably oppression involves a static perception of the world, that only one reality exists, the dress, language, and expression of the invaders. Furthermore, cultural invasion "signifies that the ultimate seat of decision regarding the action of those who are invaded lies not with them but with the invaders" (Freire 1970, 141). This denies the humanity of students and sends the message that their reality is insignificant.

Education denies the identity of students when we fail to broaden the curriculum to include student's reality. The theory of antidialogue supports the oppression of individuals, particularly those whose social lives differ significantly from the ideologies of educators. In the next section, I will explore how to re-negotiate realities that may contradict educational objectives through dialogue so that individuals are in control of their own lives as opposed to suffering the oppression of educational authority. It is only when those that are oppressed take charge of their own reality that they can be truly liberated.

Problem-Posing Education

One of the fundamental posits of socialization is that reality only comes into being through experience. Teachers often teach at students, depositing information, instead of allowing them to experience knowledge with the teacher. This results in schooling being removed from student experience.

Knowledge cannot become real for them if not experienced. Freire (1970) states that through careful analysis of most teacher-student relationships,

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration- contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance (Freire 1970, 53).

Through actions of antidialogue, the student subjects from Jackson had experienced schooling removed from their social experiences.

Shor (1992) asserts that,

An empowering teacher does not talk knowledge at students but talks with them. In a critical classroom, the teacher does not fill students unilaterally with information, but rather encourages them to reflect mutually on the meaning of any subject matter before them (Shor 1991, 85).

It is the process of reflection that enables a problem-posing dialogue to emerge. In order to challenge those student realities which oppose educational objectives, the students must first reflect upon their reality in order to define it. Reflection leads to consciousness and action. Freire says "reflection- true reflection- leads to action" (Freire 1970, 48). Too often reality is taken for granted, therefore, no action is deemed necessary.

Reflection

In one dialogical exchange with my subjects, they reflected on incidents when they sought advice for difficult

situations. As was demonstrated in previous data, most of the time, the subjects look towards their friends or older siblings for direction. Advice and action through peer guidance was their reality. Through the reflective process of multiple students, they were able to discuss alternate possibilities of whom to turn to when a difficult situation arises:

S: In Mrs. Connors's class, a girl had a problem with us and she was talking behind our backs and we found out about it and we went to go sort it out with them but they told on us. We never tell on others, we just talk to our friends.

A: What do you mean you sorted it out?

S: We pushed her around and told her to quit it.

A: Do you ever feel like you want to talk to anyone older about your problems?

S: Sometimes, but most of the time, I feel like my friends can help me.

S: The teachers get too serious and they call the cops.

S: Not Mrs. Hennessey, she wouldn't get too serious about it.

A: So has anyone you know ever gone to Mrs. Hennessey for advice? Would her advice be different than a friend?

S: Well, she gives smarter advice. That happened with me and Sandra, remember? Allison was smoking and we care about her, you know? But if we told a friend, they wouldn't do anything.

A: So what was Mrs. Hennessey's advice?

S: She talked to her. And Allison wasn't mad that we told on her. She forgave us. I would forgive my friends if they told on me because it was out of concern.

The simple question of whether or not they had ever considered talking to an adult about their difficulties prompted a reflective response from a student who had an experience seeking advice from her teacher. Through that reflective response, the student proposed an alternate reality for the group that was positive, specifically looking towards a teacher for guidance. Problem-posing is the process of personal reflection of experiences, dialogue, and then action. Shor (1992) asserts,

When we participate in critical classes, we can go beyond merely repeating what we know or what we have been taught. We can reflect on reality and on our received values, words, and interpretations in ways that illuminate meanings we hadn't perceived before. This reflection can transform our thought and behavior, which in turn have the power to alter reality itself (Shor 1991, 22).

The difficulty many educators face with the problem-posing process is that the action is not always immediate or discernible. Learning through problem posing often takes time to absorb and experience. For example, in the previous example when the girls had a conflict, their immediate choice was to sort it out through aggression since that was the reality in which the students handle their problems. After problem-posing an alternative choice, talking to a teacher, future actions may be considered or modified through the dialogic exposure of alternate experiences.

Throughout our conversational exchanges, students often discussed the challenges they faced in their community such

as gangs and peer pressures. The reflective element of problem-posing was essential for the students in order for them to voice their feelings on these issues:

S: My sister is in a gang.

A: What's the story with your sister?

S: My sister, Sharon, she got into a gang, the blues, Cryps, and my sister was with her friends walking, and there was a gang, the reds, Bloods, they came out of nowhere and shot my sister's friend. Their friend, they shot her, so she just died, and they saw the gun so they started jamming. I guess the Bloods started chasing after them and then my sister quit being a gangster because she was afraid she might die, too.

S: My best friend, where I used to live, me and her sister, we used to be really close. She was in a gang, too, and she wanted to get out, but she died before she could get out. Her boyfriend shot her.

A: Why did he shoot her?

S: I don't know, they just had a fight. Not my sister, my best friend's sister.

A: Do you ever feel like the fighting or pressures are things you get tired of?

S: I never thought about it.

S: Never thought about what?

A: Do you ever wish you didn't face the pressures of fighting and gangs?

S: Yeah, I've thought about gangs. When I'm watching movies, you know, and some people want to get out. And, like, just thinking about it, you know, what happened to Liz, the girl that died, I don't feel like joining anymore. And her brother still stresses, like, you know, that he's in a gang, but I don't know if he is. He never told me. Even by my looks, like right now, like baggy stuff, they're going to think I'm in a gang.

A: How about you? You were the first one that brought this up the fighting. How do you feel about it?

S: Sometimes it doesn't bother me, but most of the time it does.

A: What part bothers you?

S: The violence and smoking, too, 'cause you can't quit. Like my cousin, most of my cousins that are teenagers, smoke, and they say it's really, really, hard to quit. I don't want to smoke because it's going to be hard to quit.

S: And when you get pregnant, it's going to be hard to quit so you're just going to keep on smoking and your baby's going to come out and have problems.

S: Did your cousin have it recently?

S: No, but she never listens.

A: So you're thinking about your future?

S: Yeah, because my cousin is pregnant now, and she smokes.

S: That happened to my cousin, too. Her baby came out and like, she smoked while it was in her stomach so now her eyes are cross-eyed and she has asthma.

Through reflection of their experiences, the students were able to discuss some of the issues that challenge educational ideology such as gangs and smoking. Their reflections stated some of the learning objectives of educators, the violence ingrained in gangs and the difficulties to quit an unhealthy habit, smoking. Their reflections and language taught these lessons which is at the heart of problem-posing. Freire (1970) concludes that,

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building (Freire 1970, 47).

Dialogue

The second crucial element of problem-posing is dialogue. As Shor (1992) stated, problem-posing does not allow the teacher to talk knowledge at the students, but rather, with them. That means allowing students to reflect on their experiences and propose, through language, alternate realities that may not have been imagined.

The theory of socialization proposes that what is not experienced cannot be real. Therefore, dialogue allows alternate realities to become real when experienced through language. Shor (1992) says,

According to Freire, human beings are naturally inquisitive and communicative. By nature, he wrote, people are curious about their environment and conditions. They can learn what they know and don't know, and then use their knowledge to learn more as well as to solve problems they observe. Dialogue is a capacity and inclination of human beings to reflect together on the meaning of their experience and their knowledge. Dialogue, then, can be thought of as the threads of communication that bind people together and prepare them for reflective action (Shor 1992, 86).

It is through dialogue, that educators are able to problem-pose the difficult realities students face and allow them to experience alternate possibilities. In one dialogic exchange, the students and I discussed the conflict between engaging in violence and being suspended or avoiding violence in order to stay in school and achieve future goals. They had talked about what occupations they wanted to pursue in the future and how school might help them achieve those goals. A few of

them, however, had been suspended for aggression and struggled between making choices:

A: What makes you most excited about Junior High?

S: Seeing my old friends again.

S: I'm not excited because I'm going to a new Junior High and none of my friends will be there.

S: What makes me nervous is the classes.

S: Or if you're walking around with a blue sweater and someone's a red, you may get jumped. Junior High is when the violence really starts.

S: Knives and stuff. That's when the weapons come out.

A: So does that scare you? How do you feel about that?

S: It scares me. 'Cause you could be walking down the street or sidewalk, they could pull out a knife and stab you. Hit and run, I mean stab and run.

A: Why do you think that happens?

S: They probably hate the person or color.

S: Or someone paid them to do it.

S: Or they had low self-esteem.

A: How do you feel about violence?

S: I want to avoid it.

S: Yeah, because I want to achieve my goals.

A: But you had once said you want to protect your friends. What if your friend was in a fight and wanted your help? How would you decide what to do?

S: Well, it's either taking a chance with your life and saving your friend or moving on. It's either that or take a risk with your life.

A: Could you see yourself getting involved with weapons if your friends were in trouble?

S: No, I hope not.

S: I hope my school isn't like that.

S: Well, I care about my friends a lot but want to achieve my goals, so it's a hard choice.

S: I think you could always come back to school, so I'd help them with their problems. I think I'd back up my friends. There's always a later chance. There's always three strikes.

Another difficulty with problem-posing is that students may not always adhere to educational objectives. In the previous passage, the students contemplated a difficult issue; whether to back up their friends when they are in trouble (usually through violence) or walk away in order to avoid trouble and stay in school.

Two different student perspectives were presented. One student acknowledged that protecting friends sometimes means taking a chance with your own life. Another student felt as though there are many chances to get your life back on track so one should protect their friends at all costs. This certainly isn't an easy topic for students to come to a conclusion based on what is the correct choice.

However, problem-posing doesn't have a palpable outcome. Learning takes place when the students face a similar situation in the future and are forced to take action. It is at that point that students may remember an alternative reality that was once discussed and experienced through dialogue. At that decisive moment of action, learning may take place when students reflect on multiple realities.

Due to the fact that problem-posing does not have an outcome which can be assessed, there exists a breakdown of teacher authority. Freire (1970) states,

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the-students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is not longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students. Authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it (Freire 1970, 61).

Traditionally, teachers are the ones who teach, while students absorb, and then are later tested on the absorption of knowledge. Problem-posing offers a distinct method of teaching whereby teachers and students mutually analyze an issue through reflection and dialogue. In one of our conversations, a student subconsciously proposed the importance of problem-posing and gave insight about discipline to the traditional authority figure, the teacher:

A: So how does a student make a choice of when to follow the rules and when to break a rule? How do students make the decision, either from your own experience or people you know?

S: I think to show them how wrong it is, like, teachers should show what happened to one person or these two people, show them what happened to them, maybe they'll learn from their actions. Through what they did, show them how wrong it is. If two people got into a fight and they were hurt badly, then, um, they could show us how, like how wrong it is, how badly we can get hurt. So maybe they'll learn from other people's mistakes.

Problem-posing attempts to "show" students educational purposes through dialogue. As the student explained, humans can learn from another person's experiences. Realities can

be re-defined through reflection and dialogue. Problem-posing offers a democratic, cognitive, manner in which to incorporate student voice in the curriculum even when those voices contradict educational objectives.

CHAPTER FIVE

RENAMING THE WORLD

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 (Freire 1970, 31).

This thesis investigated what was defined as Simon (1989) as a "project of possibility",

an activity determined by both real and present conditions, and certain conditions still to come which is trying to bring into being (Simon 1989, 136).

Specifically, my focus was whether student voice could be incorporated in the classroom curriculum when student reality contradicts educational ideology. It questions who controls and defines education and what human capacities are allowed to enter the classroom. Furthermore, this project attempted to find an educational practice which encourages and enables the realization of multiple human capacities.

The interest in this topic arose from my work in a sixth grade East San Jose public elementary school where many students faced realities very different than most educators'. This research has demonstrated the importance in

socialization shaping the students' lives, the antidialogic stance typical of many public schools and problem-posing student realities in order to transform their realities.

Student Subjects as Oppressed Beings

Freire (1970) asserts that in order for the oppressed to be liberated, they must recognize their realities as oppressive and the possibility of transition from oppression to liberation. In the case of my student subjects, perhaps one of the greatest challenges was presenting the notion that, through their own reflection and dialogue, that they were oppressed beings, both socially and institutionally. Freire (1970) says that,

the oppressed must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle. One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness (Freire 1970, 33).

Through my research, I have found two dominant sources of student oppression experienced by my sixth grade subjects.

Socialization

Humans are beings that continually interact and communicate with the world. Therefore, humans are products of socialization. Bowers states that "our own everyday sense of reality is constituted through interaction with others" (Bowers 1987, 32). Interaction with significant others creates both culture and conceptual maps on which daily life is based.

What is crucial to understand in terms of socialization and my student subjects is that the learning of certain habits, norms, and ways of thinking was essential for them to fit into their cultural society. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the data, the cultural norms of the students differed greatly from those of most educators, or at least, from the ideals educators hope to instill in students.

The socialization of the research participants stemmed from basic inequalities existent in the East San Jose community. Many families spoke no English and had jobs that required that they work long hours for little pay. Therefore, the data indicated that the interaction of the research subjects with significant others often was not their parental or other adult figures.

They spent most of their time with peers, teenage family members, and neighbors. These significant persons in the students' lives often lacked the age and wisdom of life experiences typically characteristic of adults. Students could not bring in the knowledge of what schools define as appropriate behavior without more adult guidance outside the classroom. This is not to say those educational norms could not be learned in school, but these students did constantly face disparity between community and institutional norms.

The second aspect of socialization encountered by the subjects was that their social world was experienced as taken-for-granted. Many students discussed the violence

surrounding their community. Their friends, family, and neighbors used aggression to handle problems. Therefore, the violence and aggression experienced in the community was often brought into school because it was a taken-for-granted reality. These oppressive elements of the student experiences contribute to their overall oppressive state of being.

Traditional practices of teaching

Another oppressive element experienced by the students at Jackson was the antidialogic practices of Jackson Elementary School. The data presented in this thesis demonstrated that those with power at Jackson used technical solutions to conform the oppressed towards personal objectives. These technical solutions included a zero tolerance policy, paper citations, suspension, and silenced student voices. Traditional notions of teaching frequently devise specific strategies and techniques to use in order to meet predefined, given objectives.

Freire (1970) describes this kind of teaching as the "banking" concept of education. He states that,

education . . . becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor. . . . Students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat (Freire 1970, 53).

Teaching becomes linear with general goals applicable to a static population. The problem is that students are not static and to pre-set learning objectives serves to de-

humanize those who are educated. Furthermore, it presents an audible silence (Bowers 1987).

An audible silence has been described as areas of social and individual experience not presented in the school curriculum. The audible silence existent in this research were the realities experienced through socialization by the students of Jackson and ignored by school administrators. What is unique about an audible silence is that it does not exist because of taken-for-granted beliefs. Rather, an audible silence constitutes a conscious awareness of a particular aspect of social life which is silenced at school.

The administrators at Jackson have a fair understanding of the socio-economic background of the students which greatly influence their reality. However, they probably have not had the necessary tools to understand, incorporate, and educate students in a manner which validates their social experiences. Bowers (1987) asserts,

The psychological maturity of the teacher is an area with which most teacher training institutions avoid getting involved, except in extreme cases. But another condition essential to the success of helping students examine taken-for-granted beliefs, that relates to the teacher's ability to decode the culture, is an area in which teacher training institutions can take more responsibility (Bowers 1987, 83).

Therefore, in order to find ways to promote student voice in the curriculum, teachers must find ways to decode student culture and use teaching practices that acknowledge and incorporate student experiences.

Recommendations for a Liberating Education

Throughout Freire's (1970) theories of empowering education, he emphasizes three required stages of liberation: reflection, dialogue, and action. In this thesis, I have engaged in reflections and conversational interviews with students who have experienced oppression both socially and institutionally. The next stage is action.

Through our dialogic exchanges, a theory of action developed for those educators committed to the task of incorporating the cultural norms and social realities of students in the classroom. I recommend an understanding and practice of the following concepts:

1. The Sociology of Knowledge: Through communication and influential persons, the social environment is a constant source of reinforcement on students, thus creating knowledge. Behavior cannot be separated from linguistic and cultural roots, yet the origin of knowledge lies in historic and political power relations. Due to the fact that knowledge is humanly constructed, schools can introduce a functional knowledge of the cultural norms appropriate to life in the classroom, therefore reconstructing knowledge. Nevertheless, culture and reality experienced outside the classroom occurs at a tacit level and needs to be acknowledged and incorporated in the reconstruction process.

2. Socialization→ Dialogue→ Counterdialogue→

Transformation: Due to the influential nature of socialization, one cannot merely prescribe alternate realities for students. Dialogue offers the possibility of experiencing multiple realities. Through the reflection and verbalizing of life experiences, students are able to counteract taken-for-granted realities by exposing the group to alternate experiences and ideas. It is through the counteractive dialogue that students enter a liminal state of being and question what is reality. This wallowing state may take minutes or years but if reality is altered through the dialogic process, then transformation has taken place.

3. Banking Education vs. Problem-Posing: The traditional methods of teaching can be characterized as "banking education" (Freire 1970) whereby students are seen as voids that need to be filled. It contradicts the sociology of knowledge that understands knowledge as an entity which is humanly constructed. Rather, banking education depicts knowledge as existent outside the human which needs to be learned as opposed to experienced. Furthermore,

Banking education attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing. . . . Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. . . . In sum, banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take the

people's historicity as their starting point (Freire 1970, 64-65).

4. The Process of Problem-Posing: The three essential elements of problem-posing are reflection, dialogue, and action. However, Shor (1992) proposes a pedagogy of empowerment through problem-posing that allows educators to understand and practice the theory through specific values. These values allow students to experience education and incorporates their socialized worlds.

a. Participation- this is the most important place to start in problem-posing. Student involvement is essential if multiple human realities are going to be exposed and negotiated. Furthermore, it allows students to feel like they are in sufficient command of the learning process.

b. Affective learning- traditional methods of teaching invoke negative emotions such as boredom, resentment, and frustration. Affective learning seeks a positive relationship between thought and learning whereby students co-develop the curriculum through their social experiences and interests.

c. Problem-posing practice- the teacher acts as the facilitator of critical dialogue in the class. Traditional roles of authority are dismissed as each class member has equal validity in what he/she discusses. All subject matter are issues to be

questioned as opposed to universally accepted. Students are encouraged to be thoughtful and active.

d. Situated- words are a powerful influence of culture and offers strong resources for problem-posing.

Teachers must situate problem-posing in the language, cultures, and themes of the students.

e. Multiculturalism- similar to the situated context of the students, problem-posing requires the teacher to incorporate student speech, community life, and perceptions as the foundations of the curriculum.

f. Dialogic- the nature of a dialogic relationship is that one person does not talk at another, but rather, with that person. Therefore, knowledge is constructed in students' speech as the teacher's role is to encourage students to reflect on any subject matter before them.

g. Desocialization- this process takes place as traditional practices of teaching are altered. Teachers must acknowledge and reflect on the traditional values, power relations, and discourse, inside the classroom and out. Both educators and students are desocialized as equal members in class critically examine learned behaviors and taken-for-granted beliefs.

h. Democratic authority- a democracy is characterized by open communication and mutual governance in a community. The environment of problem-posing should be

democratic in nature whereby all members have a chance to express ideas, frame purposes, and act on intentions.

As educators, a theory of action is essential to liberate traditional practices of teaching and validate the students' social world. Educational ideology is inevitable; the purpose of education is to guide and facilitate the development of knowledge in students. Nevertheless, knowledge has to be understood as humanly constructed. The oppression of students' social conditions robs them of the empowering ability to develop knowledge and de-humanizes their being. Problem-posing offers a solution to incorporate students' reality in the curriculum because the process allows students to rename their world.

It is true that most teacher education programs avoid issues of psychological maturity within the practice of teaching. Decoding culture and understanding knowledge as humanly constructed are issues infrequently addressed. The problem with the lack of educational theory is that due to socialization, teachers will teach the way they had been taught. Their own experiences of education contribute to their taken-for-granted realities without ever being examined. Traditional methods of teaching silence the voices of young people and deprive them an empowering development of knowledge.

Problem-posing pedagogy is a challenging practice in the classroom because it acknowledges multiple human capacities

and breaks the traditional role of authority held by the teacher. Problem-posing may encounter resistance from both students, who are not traditionally allowed the opportunity to create knowledge, and school administrators, who may practice traditional banking methods of education. Freire asserts, "the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom" (Freire 1970, 29).

Nevertheless, if the goals of teachers are to educate as opposed to control students, then problem-posing offers a liberating experience. Students are able to share their worlds and have them validated, even those worlds which are filled with challenges. Dialogue also has the power to transform and rename the world. Finally, problem-posing offers a pedagogy for all persons in education to share their worlds and develop understanding, cooperation, and above all, tolerance.

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