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Explorations of Educational Purpose 12

Paulo Freire: Teaching for Freedom and Transformation

The Philosophical Influences on the Work of Paulo Freire

Springer

Paulo Freire: Teaching for Freedom and Transformation

EXPLORATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Volume 12

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The Philosophical Influences on the Work of Paulo Freire

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For Dorian and Caitlin

Foreword

Criticality isn't particularly popular
Shirley R. Steinberg

Paulo Freire, like John Dewey, was and is a hated scholar. To some readers, the assertion that these two men were not revered by everyone would be surprising. To others, those who have read Freire and Dewey, and who continue to work to keep a critical progressive pedagogy elastic and thriving, they probably know how much their own work is reviled. This book is about Paulo Freire, a man whose work was feared and hated even as a new scholar, whose name continues to raise blood pressure when discussed in many faculties of education. What is it about the notion of social justice and equity that bothers so many of the privileged? Why is it that this humble man from Recife, this belly-laughing, religious, philosopher-teacher, lover, and ex-convict elicits such anger? In our current political climate, even 30-year-old books by Jonathan Kozol create animosity.

The education of teachers in North America ceased, for the most part, years ago. Somehow the pedagogy of the pedagogues became relegated to KWL charts, rubricization, high-stakes testing, and teacher-proof units and texts created by publishers. I remember clearly thinking that Piaget was quite passé back in the day, and now, at least to me, I am reconsidering him as somewhat progressive. That's how low we have gone.

In a meeting somewhere in New York a month ago, I was with a member of the NY State Board of Regents, and one of the NY Education czar's top men, Joe Frey. As we discussed teacher education and new programs, Frey was describing the new mandate under Patterson's man, Commissioner David Steiner. [A sidebar here, Steiner is the former dean of Hunter College, considered by many in the 1990s as a "maverick," and the author of *Rethinking Democratic Education: The Politics of Reform.* Steiner is an intellect, and somewhat of a philosopher scholar, in the tradition of a foundations professor. He certainly was a Deweyan at one point.] Frey told us that NY State has now determined to bring in "non-traditional" teachers. That is, to bring in teachers who are not teachers. Frey asserted that the problem with the NY schools was the Faculties of Education, and that his office was redesigning the concept of what a teacher was meant to do. This had to be done outside of the confines of higher education, and definitely, out of a school of education.

I was being paid as a consultant to meet with Frey, so I listened with interest and attempted to ask bland questions. I asked him how they intended to teach the teachers how to teach. Frey replied that pedagogy was not necessary, the reason children in New York were not learning was due to the fact that they were content deficient. I asked about the class issues, the difference in opportunities in marginalized areas. Frey exclaimed that all children in New York State have the same opportunities. He began to describe what he saw as the new New York school. Tied intricately with Obama's new *Race to the Top,* Frey said that content specificity and rigorous testing would be increased. Listening with all the subtlety I could muster, I asked how this new curriculum would be delivered.

Frey said that Pearson Publishing was already creating the new statewide curriculum. They were well into the development, and he had high hopes for the product. Going on with some specificity, he added that all schools would have this implemented within a stated timeline. I scoured my mind to think of who could be involved in this development. Knowing most of the New York professor-types in my field, I was wondering who got this consultant gig, and, frankly, how lucrative it would be for him or her. Remembering Sternberg and the millions he amassed with *Success for All,* which didn't even lead to success for some... this New York/Pearson marriage would yield interesting progeny. Frey kept referring to Pearson and the Pearson curriculum...so I had to ask, "Joe, sorry to stop you here, but who are the educational scholars working with Pearson? I just want to get an idea of the ideological foundations of the new program." He didn't hesitate:

"We don't have education people...scholars or academics working on this, Pearson is developing the program for us. After it is developed we will have some people look at it."

But I digress...this book is not for those who support a deskilled notion of teaching. It is not for those who have bought into the test-driven *Race to the Top* cum *No Child Left Behind* decontextualized rhetoric. This book is for those who seek a pedagogy to transform. Not a canon, not a method, and certainly, not the Freirean way...it is for those who desire elasticity in their teaching, who don't intend to dwell in the bulletin-boarded halls of pastel schooling. Along with a mandate for pedagogy, Freire's work combines with the critical theoretical philosophies of those from the Frankfurt School. This ideological stance calls for teachers to identify sources of power, how power works, and how the marginalized are repressed due to sources of power. This is where teaching teachers gets dicey. It is essential that we name the names of those in power, we work with students to understand the machinations of power, and we create a curriculum of empowerment, which also works within the confines of state- or provincially mandated curricula.

In cultural studies, many of us have discussed the notion of *a culture of fear.* That phrase tends to identify issues regarding political and economic states of being, and current oppression of citizenry. It is also used in connection with racism and sexism, basically discussing how prejudices are rooted in visceral fear and ignorance. I contend that the culture of fear that I see daily exists in public schools and faculties of education. Tenure terror coupled with measurable running records smothers

any creativity or initiative that teachers might have. As teachers who teach critical pedagogy, we often get students returning to our offices after their first job, telling us that "all that social justice and empowerment stuff was great, but we don't have that option. We have to test and measure, there is no time for Freire." The attrition rate of new teachers grows as the socioeconomic condition of a community declines. In New York City schools, teachers actually make less money in Manhattan than they do in Long Island, in Garden City, for instance. Afraid to lose their jobs, afraid to be caught teaching *off* the books, afraid to find alternative ways to teach curriculum, teachers are just afraid. Teachers of teachers are just as afraid, crushed by the weight of for-profit behemoth NCATE, American schools of education scurry and jump to the demand for initial "accreditation" visits, and 5-year revisits. After escaping to Canada, I watch bemused as my friends tell me their soap operatic tales of "cooking the curricular books," changing stats, and late-night authorship of faux mission statements. Schools pay NCATE a large amount of money, NCATE demands accountability, and teaching is brought to the proverbial screeching halt as deans and department chairs chortle the Pagliaccian demand to *Vesti la giubba*. . .perform and put on the costumes for NCATE.

No wonder Freire is hated. Becoming critical is always an act of becoming. It is not rubric-friendly, nor charted on a weekly record. Fear has been instilled within the very bowels of education, and we are now dealing with the stomach flu of publisher-driven, centralized, standardized, capitalized, cauterized pedagogy. What are we going to do about it?

Shirley R. Steinberg is research professor (professora investigadora) for Generalitat de Catalunya at the University of Barcelona and teaches at McGill University.

Preface

The recent G20 events in Toronto vividly illustrated the precarious state of contemporary capitalism and its corresponding impact on freedom of speech and assembly. The 1.4 billion dollar security price tag for the G8 and G20 meetings, the arbitrary arrest and detention of many independent journalists and almost a thousand other passive observers and protesters, and the point-blank firing of rubber bullets into the bodies of young women who were merely retreating from charging, baton wielding police officers painted a troubling portrait of the changing structural landscape.

Within a post-neoliberal context, the goals of the marketplace, and its methods of operation, are increasingly reflected in the organization of education. This relationship ensures that students are indoctrinated into a monolithic worldview devoid of social critique or alternative social visions. Successful ideologies such as neoliberalism typically seek to naturalize their assumptions and present them as self-evident or the only option available. Beneath the contemporary discourse that universities must conform to meet the challenges of the global economy by restructuring to meet the labor market needs of industry is an ideology of structural paralysis. It is, as Freire would observe, an act of dehumanization.

Universities, now largely directed by governments and their corporate allies, effectively limit student exposure to alternative social visions based on more democratic assumptions about what constitutes both a quality university experience and an acceptable society. Democracies are only meaningful to the extent citizens are offered genuine political options at both the theoretical and practical levels.

Neoliberal capitalism undeniably generated its own considerable level of multifaceted and sustained violence. Whether it was the widespread elimination of social programs, the paucity of decent employment opportunities, the dramatic rise in poverty, or the more overt violence of Seattle and Quebec City, neoliberalism was, as Peter McLaren so aptly described it, “Capitalism with the gloves off.” But this was a capitalism still basking in the delight of Soviet socialist collapse. It was a capitalism portrayed as the best of all possible worlds and a system destined to deliver wealth and happiness to those, as Prime Minister Harper put it, “play by the rules.” However, the facade and promise of neoliberal capitalism collapsed in concert with the housing bubble created by greedy Wall Street investment houses. The subsequent trillion dollar bailout in the USA merely underscored the control a small

percentage of the population enjoys over the shape of our society. The rationale we were offered for this massive expenditure of public dollars was that the same, corporate interests who caused the collapse were "too big to fail." We are now once again encouraged to believe that the recovery and restoration of this same system is both possible and desirable, a message conveyed by corporate friendly governments and their tools of mainstream media deception.

The recent G20 events in Toronto and the level of sophisticated police violence strategically used to suppress and manipulate public opinion marked a new phase in neoliberalism. No longer advancing the now unconvincing argument that unfettered capitalism is working (regardless of whether census data are muted or not), the 1.4 billion dollar security cost purchased a distraction from practical problems and instead painted concerned demonstrators exercising their democratic freedom as thugs and criminals who attacked and burned police cars, and smashed shop windows. The mainstream media, who clearly captured on camera the undeniable firing of rubber bullets into retreating protesters, supported the draconian police action by their muted response, or by questioning the veracity of rubber bullet reports. Capitalism, then, has entered a new and distinct phase where military police state enforcement of its practices is now the accepted norm, and the suppression of fundamental democratic rights and freedoms is passively accepted. We are literally at war and as US Senator Hiram Warren Johnson is purported to have said, "The first casualty when war comes is truth."

Within post-neoliberal capitalism, the goals of corporations are unquestionably adopted by higher education in the near complete absence of any concerted faculty or faculty association response. The University of Toronto, arguably the flagship institution of post-secondary education in Canada, recently closed a center devoted to the work of internationally renowned intellectual and literary critic, Northop Frye. The University of Toronto's Centre for Ethics, the newly created Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies, the Centre for International Studies and five language departments are also scheduled for closure. The university will no longer grant graduate degrees in comparative literature and no additional faculty will be hired in the subject area. Of course, the situation at the University of Toronto, although high profile, is far from unique.

Universities across most developed countries are actively eliminating those disciplines and, by extension, the related classroom discussions that might enable students to imagine alternative social designs or critique current structural conditions. This is, of course, as Freire so aptly pointed out, a type of violence in itself since it undercuts human ontology. However, as the economy declines into increasing levels of despair, corporate control over the ideological and material direction of universities as potential sites for social subversion is necessary to maintain the monolithic status quo.

Democracies are only authentic to the extent their citizens are offered genuine political options and provide public discursive spaces where these options might be explored and debated. The democratic responsibility of university faculty to discuss alternative social visions and critique the prevailing social and economic design is obviated by corporate influence, complicit governments and, perhaps worst of

all, a university managerial class comprised of unrepentant faculty sycophants and career aspirants. The idea that university faculty might fulfill the role of a public intellectual has virtually disappeared. It has been replaced with the idea that faculty are employed as clerical staff under the direction and weight of an oppressive bureaucratic administrative structure where collegial governance and faculty input are openly dismissed as passé.

There is no other time in modern history when the ideas of Paulo Freire are as important, relevant, and urgently required as they are now. We are a culture in crisis, brought about by the complete oppression of thought and action beyond that consistent with capitalist principles. We hope this book brings about serious reflection from those who read it and inspires academics, students, and other citizens to take the first steps toward meaningful structural change.

Acknowledgments

Joe Kincheloe became a very dear friend and close colleague before he left us. We owe an incalculable debt to both him and his beloved partner Shirley Steinberg for their support of this project. We also thank Shirley for agreeing to write the foreword for this book. We wish to thank our editor, Bernadette Ohmer with Springer Publishing, for her guidance, patience, and understanding in bringing the book to fruition. We acknowledge the emotional and professional support afforded by our colleagues and administrators at the University of Indianapolis and the University of New Brunswick. Finally, and most importantly, without the support and love from our partners, Julie Dale and Judith Ann Margison, completing the book would have been impossible.

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About the Authors

John A. Dale is an instructor who challenges prevailing educational values and attitudes with his students at the University of Indianapolis.

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Chapter 1
Our Journey to Freire

Introduction

On May 2, 1997 Paulo Reglus Neves Freire died of heart failure at the age of 75. He left behind a wife, children, many friends, and of course virtually countless readers of his books and essays. There is little question that his passing has left a tremendous void in critical scholarship in contemporary education. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that Freire was the seminal architect of introducing critical theory into contemporary pedagogical discourse.

His influence on critical pedagogy is widely recognized, if not always fully appreciated or acknowledged by those working in the field. According to Macedo, "Freire [is] considered the most important educator in the last half of this century" (Freire & Macedo, 1998, p. xiv). We unequivocally agree with Macedo's assessment and begin this volume with our explicit appreciation for Freire's impact on education and educators. In this initial chapter, we will explain how this man, filled with love, compassion, hope, and a profound sense of social justice, inspired our own respective pedagogies and those of so many others around the world.

About 1 year ago, we lost another seminal figure in contemporary critical pedagogy, our friend and colleague, Joe Kincheloe. Joe died unexpectedly of a heart attack while taking a deserved vacation in Jamaica from his Canada Research Chair position at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Unfortunately, we never enjoyed the opportunity of meeting Paulo Freire, but one of us actually grew quite close to Joe over the final 2 years of his life. During that period we gained a deep and abiding respect for him as a sensitive, caring, and especially gifted human being. One of Joe's major priorities was keeping alive Freire's legacy and we hope by writing this book to assist with that objective in some modest fashion. In many ways, Joe provided us with the inspiration to write this text to promote his legacy of love and caring and ensure his quest for universal social justice remains at the forefront of educational discourse. He will be deeply missed both professionally and personally—we have lost a valued colleague, a treasured friend, and, most importantly, a tremendous person.

In spite of its ubiquitous popularity in critical pedagogic circles, we believe the understanding of Freire's work and its philosophical underpinnings is often

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inadequate or inaccurate. As often occurs within education, various philosophical concepts are reduced to superficial slogans. Drawn from Freire's pedagogical ideas, terms such as banking education, humanization, and conscientização have unfortunately become little more than convenient slogans in the practice of critical pedagogy. One of our primary objectives in writing this text, then, is providing a far more sophisticated but accessible understanding of Freire's philosophy of education that does theoretical and pedagogical justice to terms such as those identified above.

When reading Freire or when discussing his work in the classroom, it is necessary to remember that his primary audience was typically not academics, although he most certainly would not exclude this group from his intended sphere of influence. His various ideas and their pedagogical implications targeted the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed groups that continue to comprise far too many individuals within our present neoliberal global context. His pedagogy targeted formally uneducated populations and yet his teaching philosophy draws upon some of the most intellectually important and influential ideas in Western thought.

The academic literature in education employing Freire's ideas is voluminous because, at least at some level, many academics and teachers appreciate that something is deeply wrong with the current organization of society. Why in a country as wealthy as the United States do millions of people go to bed each night hungry? Why does Canada have a poverty rate of between 12 and 15 percent (Statistics Canada, 2009)? Compassionate and critical teachers struggle to find ways to overcome the challenges these inequities inevitably cause in their classrooms. They believe, as did Freire and Kincheloe, that education can help transform these conditions and, in so doing, create a more just, compassionate, and equitable society. This ambitious goal is, of course, the goal of critical pedagogy.

There are those within and beyond the academy who view Freire's work with various levels of either contempt or apprehension. His thinking and scholarship is sometimes considered dangerously revolutionary as it proposes dismantling the hegemonic domination of society through education and political activism. Stakeholders who view the primary mission of teaching to be the instrumental transfer of information from those who "know," typically government officials controlled and directed by their corporate captains, to those who require that "knowledge," the students, for instrumental human capital preparation understandably reject or fear his ideas because of their potential threat to change the status quo. At all levels of contemporary education the political class has developed and enforced a homogeneous and monolithic curriculum to meet corporate needs and interests, not the needs or aspirations of teachers and students, and especially not the needs of the most destitute and helpless members of our society. Higher education, a forum where all ideas and agendas should be subjected to rigorous analysis and evaluation, has instead actively naturalized the same neoliberal and corporate agenda that drives more and more people into various levels of despair (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009).

Regardless of where one stands ideologically in relation to Freire's tremendous pedagogical influence, his ideas are undeniable lightening rods that promote discussion about education and its impact on social organization. For example,

Schugurensky (1998) correctly points out, "There are thousands of books, articles and dissertations written about Freire, full of descriptions, interpretations and critiques" (p. 18). Torres (1998) maintains that Freire has been "mystified by some, demonized by others, misunderstood by many, Paulo Freire often distanced himself from the images about him and his work from both theoreticians and practitioners, left wing and right wing, all over the world" (p. 107). We have also found his work mystifying at times but worthy of further analysis and explication in light of its implications for education and for strengthening our own emancipatory educational practice.

A critical analysis of Freire's work and successfully implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom begins by closely examining and understanding his various philosophical influences. That mission is the primary task we assume in this book. It is important from the outset to understand that Freire rejected the notion his pedagogic practices transferred seamlessly across cultures and historical experiences. If someone is seeking "best practice" in critical pedagogy, he or she will not find it in the following pages. Rather, Freire argued that his ideas were in constant need of reinvention and adjustment depending on the context of their application. He understood that education is contextual and that each context has corresponding needs and outcomes, thus no single method of instruction or "best practice" exists. We cannot agree more fully with this important implication of Freire's work that contradicts the contemporary view of education dominated by modernist assumptions regarding teaching. Kincheloe, Slattery, and Steinberg (2000) explain that in the traditional teaching approach there is

> No need to understand the intricacies of subject matter, nor to understand the sociohistorical context in which the knowledge to be taught had been produced. All [teachers] had to do was identify the subject matter to be transferred to the learner, break it into components, present it and test their students on it. It was a strategy as right as rain and so commonsensical it defied any need for justification. (p. 237)

As stated above, our primary mission in writing this text is correcting many misunderstandings and misrepresentations about Freire's philosophical theories and pedagogical concepts to strengthen their actual application. We discuss and amplify many of his ideas and explain as clearly as possible the various philosophical foundations that shape concepts critical to his pedagogy such as ontology, banking education, conscientização, and humanization.

The amount of contemporary literature discussing his work demonstrates that the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire remain wonderfully vibrant if not always fully understood for their philosophical depth and coherence. Nevertheless, we unequivocally support and admire all academics, teachers, and students who care enough about advancing social justice to engage at any level the revolutionary spirit of a transformative pedagogy based on freedom and love. Whenever possible, we use examples from our classroom experiences and those of other practitioners to help explain and understand Freire and critical pedagogy. But these samples are not a method. They are simply exemplars to highlight how his ideas might be employed within certain contexts and on particular subjects.

For example, critical pedagogues, ourselves included, seek to create dialogic classroom experiences, a practice central to many of Freire's arguments, to open channels of communication between students and teachers at the university level. We adopt the assumption that all people share in the ability and right to speak, particularly within pedagogic experiences that impact human lives. It is imperative during a period when democratic discussion is threatened by instrumental learning and behaviorist teaching practices that critical pedagogues provide space for open dialogue in classrooms. We have inevitably found in our own personal practice that dialogue requires building a relationship of trust with students. They understand when we are genuinely interested in hearing their stories and learning about their personal struggles and triumphs.

Dialogue creates open and trusting relationships between two or more people; monologues, too often the dominant discourse in schools, are closed relationships that demand centralized epistemic authority. One important aspect of dialogue is its ability to build social and emotionally caring relationships between people. Freire (2000) describes the importance of dialogue as follows:

> Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue—loving, humble, and full of faith—did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world. (p. 91)

Critically minded teachers troubled by the injustices around them are attracted to Freire's dialogical pedagogy with its compelling emphasis on student-centered learning, revealing the relationship between personal struggles and social injustice, and ultimate structural transformation.

We greatly appreciate Freire's broad appeal to educators, but we also believe that the overall complexity of his arguments can be overwhelming for educators who lack adequate knowledge about his integration of various philosophical concepts. A richer understanding of these ideas will help teachers and students see the beauty and criticality in his work and inspire an even greater sense of urgency to create meaningful social change. In the following chapters we provide an analysis and description to assist educators in understanding more fully the rich combination of philosophical ideas that shaped Freire's pedagogic views in the hope such inspiration emerges.

In spite of the attention afforded Freire's work, we are greatly concerned that few educators appreciate the fertile eclectic mix of philosophical ideas that comprise his critical pedagogy. For example, a dialogic classroom based on Freire's ideas is more than the simple antithesis of banking education. Many educators with student-centered, progressive, and constructivist leanings might reject "banking education," but often remain unaware of the corresponding philosophical arguments and commitments related to humanization that support this position. Far too often in education, then, the moral implications of Freire's work are adopted (although this is certainly important in its own right) without any corresponding analysis of their underlying philosophical foundation and supporting reasons.

Schugurensky (1998) argues there are multiple trajectories from which an analysis of Freire's work and its potential pedagogical implications can enhance appreciation of its importance and relevance to education: "From a different perspective, his contribution could be examined through the impact of his work in real pedagogical situations, where his ideas have been recreated, enriched, and distorted" (p. 18). *Our fundamental thesis is that a paucity of in-depth philosophical analysis has left an unacceptable deficit in understanding, appreciating, and applying Freire's work while promoting frequent misconceptions and creating superficial practice within education.* Indeed, the philosophical assumptions contributing to Freire's critical pedagogy require significant intellectual effort to identify, unravel, and ultimately evaluate on the basis of their epistemic, moral, and pedagogical tenability.

We wish to generate a far richer and yet more accessible understanding of Freire's theories because such important ideas, values, and attitudes should not suffer from classroom superficiality. Ideas such as banking education, conscientização, praxis, and humanization are debased when they are reduced to slogans lacking the intellectual support or discussion they deserve. A slogan in education—critical thinking is a common example—popularizes a concept or idea, but offers very little in terms of actual reflection or conceptual analysis to clarify the idea. When important pedagogical terms are applied in this fashion they often become appropriated by the corporate discourse on education and lose their edge as concepts that deconstruct and dismantle prevailing hegemonic interests. In order to understand such terms and their origins more fully, a more in-depth examination of Freire's concepts and their philosophical origins is desperately needed. In the next section of this initial chapter we wish to explain briefly the personal experiences that drew us to Freire and critical pedagogy.

Neoliberalism: Our Personal Connection to Freire

Our own relationship with Paulo Freire's pedagogy developed at least in part from our personal histories and an abiding preoccupation with issues of social justice and economic equality. We consider academic achievement and attainment as far less the outcome of individual ability than the product of social and economic opportunity.

From the moment of our initial exposure to Freire's work, we greatly admired many of his pedagogical ideas, his deep love for humanity, and his hope for creating a fair and just world. His focus on politicizing education resonated with our own schooling experiences and the challenges we continue to confront in higher education. Although we share Freire's commitment to education as a transformative vehicle for individual and collective social change, we also realize the current limits of formal education as a vehicle to achieve this objective within the present neoliberal context and the ideological stranglehold it has on all institutions, policies, and people.

In schools and curricula, the appropriation of various critical and educational concepts operates to actually obviate any serious critique of the status quo. For

example, many schools and curricula promote the concept of critical thinking while summarily dismissing or discounting the value of content knowledge. How can one think critically about the world if he/she does not understand it? Lifelong learning, once an educational idea connected to a passion for learning over the life course, has been transformed into an occupational skill where students are expected to accept individual responsibility for job retraining in the face of unstable labor market conditions. This is a prime example of educational concepts transformed into slogans and taught to students as labor market credentials.

In the current economic calamity of 2009–10, educational institutions of all stripes, having adopted a business operational model at the direction of the managerial class, race to offer unemployed or underemployed workers retraining to meet neoliberal market demands. Many of these demands have far less to do with actual labor market readiness or needs, of course, than they do with the ideological manipulation of students as future workers. For example, as we pointed out previously (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007) the emphasis on lifelong learning is little more than a call for workers to accept personal responsibility, even blame, for tumultuous labor market conditions. Students are also encouraged through career education to adopt an abstract positive attitude toward change regardless of what that change might mean vocationally and economically. Virtually all of the contemporary discourse surrounding education explicitly suggests that the social role of teachers and students is restricted to passive neoliberal compliance. McLaren (2000) refers to Freire as "a staunch critic of neo-liberalism" (p. 152) and therefore a voice of resistance to this devastating social and economic structure.

Neoliberalism is an economic, moral, and social system designed to advance 20th century global capitalism. Mayo (1999) correctly suggests that neoliberalism is hegemonic. That is, as an ideology it recognizes no national borders, political boundaries, or limits. Hegemony is a system of power exercised through ideology that completely dominates social consciousness by instilling a single set of values and ideas. Neoliberalism is a distinctly US economic model, a sort of social Darwinian economic perspective taken to its logical extreme, that devastates and blames the poor while rewarding and celebrating the rich. Neoliberalism promotes an economic structure that allows the owners of capital and production to operate virtually unobstructed around the world to take full advantage of poorly paid labor markets and nonexistent environmental regulation. The system is openly unjust and shows disdain for any pretense of social equality. For example, the managerial class is rewarded with bonuses during economic failure while workers face financial catastrophe and, yet, the system continues to operate, granted with public funds now footing the bill, in a virtually unabated fashion.

In a *laissez faire* capitalist ideology, the world's resources and its inhabitants are required to maximize profits for those controlling the means of production. All living things—but humans in particular—become mere tools or resources in the capitalist quest for endless development and wealth creation for the few. In order for capitalism to operate efficiently, it must be legitimized and accepted by the majority to maximize profits and maintain its ideological hegemony. Those it destroys must

also be willing to participate in their destruction. One mechanism to make neoliberalism or any other ideology control human consciousness is to make it part of the human cultural curriculum by discussing its purported virtues and successes while understating its limitations. Neoliberalism has been very successful in suppressing opportunities for structural critique, especially at the various levels of education. This suppression may even be achieved by generating fear and despair among the population who, in turn, see education as a vehicle to employment rather than a force for social transformation. Freire (1998b) observed

> One of the transgressions of a universal human ethic that ought to be considered criminal is programmed mass unemployment, which leads so many to despair and to a kind of living death. Thus, the preoccupation with techno-professional education for the retraining of those who have become redundant would have to be greatly increased to begin to redress the balance. (p. 116)

In light of the current economic implosion, both industrialized and nonindustrialized nations are substantially affected and forced to consider at least temporary alternatives to limit unemployed or underemployed worker suffering. Neoliberal capitalism is sensitive to the possibility of creating too much hardship with the resulting overthrow of prevailing hegemonic mechanisms. Hence, the current tempering of the effects of economic collapse is a classic case of false generosity since it stifles the scope of critique that would accompany deeper levels of hardship.

There is a further and more practical advantage in propping up a failed economic system. If consumers are unable to purchase goods and services industrialists would suffer catastrophic reductions in profits that fuel their managerial class wages and benefits. Corporations maintain fiscal control in society by dictating government policy on the economy. They are completely free to reduce labor force costs by laying off workers or by moving their business operations to locations where cheaper sources of labor are available. In sum, corporations are entirely free from any measure of social responsibility either through law or any sense of community ethics.

Freire was a vocal critic of neoliberalism particularly because of the suffering it caused at the grassroots level. Central to his critical pedagogy classroom applications are examples of corporate excess that demonstrate inequitable social arrangements and class antagonisms within capitalism. Freire recognized that all students have shared experiences within neoliberalism and based on real-world experiences they can recognize their social oppression and work to transform it. We share some of these examples in Chapter 5.

Freire adopted the concepts of oppressor and oppressed from *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx & Engels, 2001), and employed them as concrete examples of capitalism's tension between disparate economic classes. In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire observed that he knew Marx before he read him:

> Even before I ever read Marx I had made his words my own. I had taken my own radical stance on the defense of the legitimate interests of the human person. There is no theory of socio-political transformation that moves me if it is not grounded in an understanding of the human person as a maker of history and one made by history. (1998a, p. 115)

Importantly, he made no distinction or saw any dichotomy between the oppressed and oppressor as human beings except that each class was caught in capitalism's ideological antagonistic web of physical and psychological violence and victimized accordingly. We discuss Freire's dialectical approach to class antagonisms in detail in Chapter 4.

Regardless of those who naively view teaching and learning as a purely neutral and technical act, teaching is inevitably and even primarily a political act subject to the machinations of ideologies that reproduce social conditions or seek to change them. A pedagogy that fails to challenge prevailing conditions actually operates to reproduce those conditions intentionally or otherwise. Freire similarly understood that education by its very nature is always a political act, a position nicely articulated in Kincheloe's (1993) analysis on the subject:

> No aspect of schooling is ideologically innocent; no thoughts, theories, or pedagogies are completely autonomous. Ideas, perspectives, research orientations and the actions that come out of them are always connected to power and value interests. The ideological innocence that results supports the interest of the status quo, the mythology of classlessness, the equality of opportunity, the political neutrality of school, and the creed of financial success as a direct consequence of an individual's initiative. (p. 187)

Education and curricula are always political. Sometimes the political element is explicit while at other times, such as described above, it may be more difficult to identify since it comes in the form of inaction. Departments of education and locally elected school boards are overt political entities appointed and controlled by political figures. Politicians routinely use education as a major plank in their platform. They manipulate the electorate by reminding voters of education's successes under their tenure or of education's shortcomings during their opponent's term. Since political campaigns are largely funded by corporate interests education is subjected to capitalist whims and linked directly to consumerism through the discourse of human capital preparation. Curriculum inevitably includes prevailing hegemonic perspectives while leaving out the voices of others, especially those offering alternative visions of social organization. For example, in career education the corporate perspective dominates while the voice of labor, women's working experiences, and discussions of workers' rights are noticeably absent (Hyslop-Margison, 2005).

In the current education era, technology is often uncritically celebrated as the ultimate solution to educational, economic, and social progress. To be progressive, however, we sometimes must retreat as teachers and consider less technological alternatives to employ in our classrooms. In a world dominated by technological development, much of it precipitated by reasons of enhanced profit as opposed to need, parents want their children to have access to the latest technologies to increase their vendibility in the technical-rational world they experience. During the Clinton administration, the Democrats made it their educational goal to ensure every classroom in America was connected to the Internet. Recently deceased education scholar and technology critic, Postman (1996) criticized this policy by pointing out that technology was simply a tool, similar to a notebook, and could never under any circumstances constitute an educational objective. Kincheloe et al. (2000) point out the deskilling aspect of technology in teacher education where increasingly more

time is spent on manipulating technological gadgets and far less on acquiring a critical understanding of teaching and society.

As an additional example of dominance of technologies in education, many American schools accepted televisions and electrical equipment for educational programming, a move that seemed positive at first glance. But students must also watch commercials before any instructional material begins. This ensures that they develop long-term relationships with particular products and brands, and habituates new generations of children to consumer values.

Marcuse (1964) contends that instrumental techno-rationalism is historically contingent with capitalist culture. These contingencies necessarily propel technology toward purposes that protect hegemonic interests while similarly reproduce class inequalities. Marcuse employs the example of assembly line manufacturing introduced to increase human capital efficiency within a class-structured labor market to emphasize his point. He suggests that assembly lines reinforced class distinctions by exploiting the existing division of labor and further dehumanizing the vocational experience of working class people. Although other technologies might have been developed besides those favorable to a capitalist economy, within a class-stratified social framework, Marcuse argues that technology is invariably designed and applied to exploit the economically disadvantaged. It is never value neutral. Furthermore, many of the products advertised in school television programs are not in the long-term interests of students, nor are they even necessary—it is part of what Habermas (1996) refers to as the creation of "false needs." False generosity is employed by corporate stakeholders who appear to the public as helpful in "donating" such equipment, while there is an absence of criticism targeting educational technology more generally. The intent of such technologies is to build long-term brand name relationships between students and products/corporations through indoctrination and the creation of false needs rather than improve student learning.

Unlike the forced-fed neoliberal curriculum to which most students are currently exposed, we maintain, in debt to Freire's insights, that teaching is a relational activity between subjects searching for answers to questions of social, moral, and technical importance. In a world frequently at war with itself and stained with the social and psychological consequences of profound physical and intellectual oppression, Freire's pedagogy offers a guiding light in a turbulent sea of contemporary structural uncertainty. From our perspective, his views afford a calm in the storm; a point of refuge for weary educational travelers looking for somewhere to anchor their moral struggle for intellectual freedom and social justice. His critical pedagogy has always been as much about educating the teacher as educating students and it offers a refreshing philosophical perspective that not only changed the way teachers teach but, in many cases, the way they live their lives by acting upon the world:

> A correct way of thinking knows, for example, that the practice of critical teaching is not built as if thinking correctly were a mere given. However, it knows that without a correct way of thinking, there can be no critical practice. In other words, the practice of critical teaching, implicit in a correct way of thinking, involves a dynamic and dialectical movement between "doing" and "reflecting on doing. (Freire, 1998a, p. 43)

We would like our readers to appreciate that the analysis in the following narrative is derived from our own lived experience and positioning in relation to Freire's work. We are not trying to offer a final word on Freire or even suggesting our interpretation is necessarily the correct one, but it is the one that resonates most closely with our own lives and backgrounds. When we come to know any person in any position there is a certain projection of our own values and experience onto the "other." As much as we try to restrict this objectifying tendency we also should be aware of it to avoid believing that somehow our position is the absolute one. We openly make this admission in our analysis of Freire's work.

We were both born into decidedly lower-middle working class backgrounds. Like many of Freire's Brazilian students, our socioeconomic roots are based on selling our labor to others as opposed to inherited family capital and profiting from the surplus labor of workers. To borrow a Marxist term, we are members, and distinctly proud ones at that, of the proletariat. In one case, our family's subsistence came from the U.S. Midwest agrarian and manufacturing sectors and in another case from employment on the docks and railways of Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. Although these occupations constituted a very difficult working life with frequent occupational anxiety and a near-constant lack of economic stability, it kept food on both of our tables as children. Unlike Freire or millions of others around the world, we never went to bed acutely hungry or awoke without breakfast of some description on the table, nor were we forced into the moral contradictions and "illegalities" Freire confronted by stealing to survive. In these situations, of course, stealing may be counterviewed as a form of redistributive justice. Anyway, our basic subsistence needs were always met, often with a considerable amount of duress and hardship on the part of our families with a corresponding price on family emotions and family psychological health.

Although we grew up in two wealthy countries, Canada and the United States, many families around us lived in varying degrees of poverty. According to Zweig (2004), the United States suffers extreme poverty rates between 12 and 17 percent with childhood poverty in particular an ever-growing concern. The current economic collapse, of course, has only served to worsen this situation for a great many Americans. School lunch programs have grown from their inception to include more and more students each year. In recent years, teachers are organizing weekend meals for students as well and routinely taking money from their own meager resources to pay for student supplies. The fractured American facade of prosperity, a prosperity borne on the backs of unemployed and underemployed workers, is increasingly forcing teachers into taking moral action.

Many teachers help students meet basic human needs before their academic ones. Schools have become a type of food bank offering many students the only nutritional meal they receive on a daily basis. Some schools now stay open on weekends to feed students who would otherwise go without food. In Canada, the poverty rate has supposedly declined since the 1970s, but according to Sarlo (2006) the lack of official or reliable poverty measures fail to hold Canadian politicians accountable for what are actually increasing rates of poverty.

As Canada's primary trading partner, the United States teeters on financial meltdown thereby causing many Canadians to suffer as well in the form of layoffs and unemployment. The ebb and flow of neoliberal generated poverty is one reason why we believe Freire's work is particularly relevant and timely during this period of history. Beyond the abject poverty he responded to in Latin America, many people around the world including those from developed countries now suffer from inadequate resources in an era of high mass production and exceptionally high levels of wealth in some circles. The inequality between the rich and the poor has never been more pronounced. At its foundation, the problem is really not a question of economics per se but rather of refusing to accept an immutable moral obligation to ensure social justice becomes the guiding foundation of domestic and international policy formation, a point Freire understood very well.

In comparison to the economic suffering by many of those around us during the 1960s and 1970s, our own lives were actually quite comfortable. Even more dramatic was the suffering encountered during Freire's early experiences with the people he spent his entire adult life trying to help. Nevertheless the stratification that surrounded us generated corresponding questions about social justice, inequality, and capital. Why did some families have so much while others seemed to have so little? One of our fathers worked countless hours, including nights, standing on the decks of cargo ships in North Atlantic January temperatures to scratch out a living for his family. Looking at the working-class families around us, it appeared that everyone's parents worked and worked very hard, so why were some people compensated at a lesser rate in spite of their hard work? Why did the owners of the means of production live in extravagance and comparative ease while working people suffered? What was the cause or validation of the widespread social injustice we witnessed? Specifically, if hard work is valued, why does it appear that the hardest workers are very frequently compensated the least? Farm workers or migrants endured very difficult working conditions in local fields around Indiana, yet they were compensated very poorly and were obliged to live in substandard housing, a euphemism for what were essentially rundown shacks that often lacked even the most basic amenities.

Freire indicated that he grew to "know" Marx in the ravines inhabited by Brazil's slaves. Similarly, we came to recognize the inequities or dialectic of neoliberalism and discover Freire's values, long before we read his work, on Indiana's farms and in the working-class slums of Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. The structural disparity we witnessed in the working-class conditions of our youth led to the recognition of other unjust social and economic arrangements. We became sensitive to class suffering and class distinctions. For example, we did not generally associate with people outside our social class and they often dismissed us as riff raff or worse. Tacitly and overtly, we learned our place in civil society whether it was in school or trying out for local sport teams. Typically, it was the economically well-connected children, the wealthy, who consistently "excelled" in both areas because they were provided with the opportunity to do so.

Wealthy and poor people alike were estranged from social contact with children outside their own economic position. We were poor and the world, including public schooling, had a way of reminding us of our station in life. These economic social barriers and the class stratification they produced were maintained throughout society by economic ideology that causes the poor to internalize their suffering and the social reproduction mechanisms of schooling. We often were made to feel unworthy of any success and inferior to the wealthier students in the classroom. Public schools are representative of such ideologies and are microcosms of wider cultural values and attitudes. How students dress, speak, and act are interpreted and coded as part of the academic streaming process in schools. A child who dresses poorly because her family cannot afford new clothes or whose teeth are in a state of disrepair because her family cannot afford a dentist is typically written off by public education as "unlikely to succeed," a label that leads, among other things, to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Freire shared many experiences when he and his family were caught in neoliberalism's web of social class construction and its implications for life opportunities. Throughout this book, we use examples of lived experiences because Freire was a master of using historical realities to create meaning in classrooms that foster both recognition of oppression and subsequent political action. Student experiences were primary in revealing oppressive living conditions and promoting discussion about how these dehumanizing conditions might be overcome:

> Why not discuss with the students the concrete reality of their lives and that aggressive reality in which violence is permanent and where people are much more familiar with death than with life? Why not establish an "intimate" connection between knowledge considered and basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals? (Freire, 1998a, p. 36)

Arguably, the most well-known narrative describing poverty and the subsequent immorality of neoliberalism in US schools is *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. Kozol's (1991) characterization of America's education system remains applicable, perhaps more so than ever, because schools are largely funded according to local property tax values. As such, there is an even worse looming catastrophe on the public education horizon. In light of the current economic climate whereby many factories have closed, workers have lost jobs, and property values have plummeted, school financial needs continue to grow. Operating in the traditional technical-rational paradigm taught in business schools, school boards and administrators have several options at their disposal to reduce spending to deal with dwindling revenues. Among other things, they can reduce teacher numbers or already low salaries, increase class sizes, and eliminate programs. Such economic problems are amplified in poor rural and urban areas that have already suffered from poor levels of funding.

As property values plummet, property owners inevitably seek reassessment to comport with the new economic reality. Thus taxable contributions for education will be correspondingly reduced. If history is any indicator, poor schools should expect additional funding cuts, as will schools even in previously wealthy

suburban areas. As long as US public education is tied to property values and business models, teachers and students can only expect an extended period of sharp decline in available resources. The linking of education resources to real estate tax values ensures the social reproduction of educational inequality. Only an education system that views every child worthy of equal funding can overcome this catastrophe.

Our K-12 school experiences occurred during the Sputnik, Vietnam, and oil embargo eras that played huge roles in shaping education programs to technical-rational models. This transformation was guided by the political and corporate view that schooling should focus on the sciences and functional literacy to be competitive in the world marketplace. Like Freire, we were also caught in the cold war environment complete with US military jingoism, emerging neoliberalism, and "better dead than red" McCarthyism. The cold war afforded an opportunity for social control through instigating fear among the masses to protect against threats to national US business interests rapidly spreading around the globe. Giroux (2003) points out that fear is a common ideological tactic used to manipulate people in democracies to accept policies they might otherwise reject.

Using fear tactics, political leaders convinced parents and school boards to redesign the curriculum with a science-oriented emphasis to outpace the Soviets in military technology. The emphasis in schools rapidly shifted from liberal arts to supporting the "art" of war. Many corporate interests opened their checkbooks for science research designed to fuel the military industrial complex, and the economic returns they received in exchange for their initial investment were considerable. Universities often became pawns to corporate-dominated research dollars and grants. Nationalism was promoted at the expense or complete dismissal of alternative perspectives and social criticism became the exception to the rule. Similar to the post 9/11 milieu, not only was dissent marginalized, it was attacked as subversive and a threat to national security.

US public consciousness confronted a variety of overt and tacit messages in classrooms driven by corporate interests advocating the "freedom" of capitalism. The linkage of capitalism with democracy is an enduring ideological strategy that ironically attempts to connect a system of economic inequality with a system of political equality—not a remotely coherent fit and yet the ideological marriage of the two concepts has been extraordinarily successful in shaping American consciousness.

In fact, very little has changed since the cold war in using public education as a prime target for ruling ideology. In the poorest schools where books and supplies are in perpetual short supply, there are always adequate funds to purchase portraits of past and present Presidents. The Pledge of Allegiance is ritualized and obligatory with the metaphysical concept of God added to the pledge in the 1950s as a religious defense against "godless communism." Students are delivered a double dose of ideology that combines nationalism and religion. The image of the archetypical citizen, passive, religious, and patriotic, was overtly flaunted and discussed. This reinforced in students the supposed right and wrong way to "serve" one's nation. Kincheloe (1993) maintains that

> Not only does modernist education dismiss the political dimensions of teaching, it fails to connect questions of intellectual passivity to political freedom. Again, the political dimension is hidden if students are subjected to such instruction, they're tied to the whipping post of tradition. (1993, p. 40)

In the US school children are conveyed countless myths about past political leaders. For example, there is never any mention that heralded Thomas Jefferson was a slave owner, while Washington's mythical inability to lie is celebrated as some widespread American quality. This ubiquitous mendacity in public education becomes prevailing myth and is coded in students as part of American consciousness. Through such mythical manifestations in public schools, education, for all practical purposes, becomes a top-down political act designed to stifle citizen dissent by intentional deceit.

During the cold war era, we vividly remember ridiculous school drills where we were asked to hide under our wooden desks in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack as if that strategy ensured some measure of safety against weapons of complete and utter destruction. These exercises of course did have the unintended effect of making schools seem particularly unfriendly, even dangerous, sorts of places where such attacks were always a possibility. The real attack came from the curriculum itself. As Kincheloe et al. (2000) point out, "A Nation at Risk legitimized the Reagan (and later Bush) administration's view of public school reform as a means to strengthen social control. By 1984, policy discussion regarding educational equity had become both past and passé" (p. 169).

As is the case with most children, school was also a place for our socialization through personal interactions and relationship building with those around us. From the time we opened our eyes in the morning until they closed each night, learning always took place, but it was seldom the learning that parents or teachers intended. Freire suggested that cognition is recognition and we recognized relatively early that education's primary purpose was shaping us into so-called "ideal," predetermined citizens to follow prescribed norms of acceptable behavior. We learned that school was not necessarily a place for learning anything important or interesting, but a place for memorizing a plethora of useless and forgettable information, for senselessly standing in line, and for following authoritarian dictates without question. For the most part, public schools were, and still are, about training and indoctrination, and not about education. Test answers were more important than questioning test validity or considering what such testing actually tells us about the quality of education and/or student experience.

Like all children, we learned from everyone around us, and we learned from the way we were treated by other people. We learned about the world from experience, from interactions between teachers and students, and from our own expectations. There was, in retrospect, a seeming preoccupation by teachers to ensure school was anything except interesting or exciting, and instead always oppressive and boring. We had history teachers who read word-for-word from textbooks, English teachers who suggested we should quit school, and a principal tell us in front of the class we should get "the hair out of our eyes." School was generally not a pleasant experience and we fear not much has changed during the past 40 years.

Ask almost any child what he/she likes about school and his/her response will never include mention of the curriculum. He or she will inevitably speak fondly of recess, lunch, snow days, or summer breaks. There will also, of course, be some mention of that special teacher who cared about students. Over the years, we have asked many teachers in training why they are entering the profession. Typically the discussion begins with an altruistic response about caring and compassion for children and improving society. After a few years of exposure to the education system their responses usually regress to a special fondness for long summer breaks. Most teachers in training have no real sense of education's monolithic and political character, the primary reason why the majority of teachers, many of them extraordinarily gifted, leave the profession within the first 5 years.

Most importantly, during our formative schooling years, we learned that students were controlled and sorted by their particular fit within the informal and formal curriculum and assessment practices. We quickly learned about positive and negative reinforcement without attending any educational psychology classes that extolled the virtues of behaviorism in classroom management techniques. Failure to regurgitate Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind-style facts or respond appropriately to authoritarian directives led to criticism or punishment from teachers with the corresponding outcomes reported for posterity on our academic records, inscribed as a permanent labeling of our assumed academic abilities and dispositions. The "academic" problem was never a fault of the education system but always something wrong with us—the inclination to internalize was omnipresent. Conformity was rewarded whereas difference or resistance was overtly punished and we were placed into the "different" category. We are thankful that we attended public school in the pre-Ritalin era or we certainly would have been among the growing classification of "medicated" students in today's public education system.

Throughout our K-12, undergraduate, and even much of graduate school experience education was about completing program requirements for credentials rather than challenging the social structure of opportunity. It was habituation to institutionalization and offering appropriate responses to authority. Often, the educational requirements, long forgotten by now, held little practical value beyond that of human capital preparation. There was of course the overriding emphasis on maintaining a high grade point average in post-secondary education that perhaps one day would lead to an assistant professor position. Even that achievement was placed in a context of material reward to provide an income for conspicuous consumption. Finally, during our university experience, we fortunately encountered as if by accident or perhaps fate the refreshing new world of Paulo Freire and his critical pedagogy.

Experiencing Freire's Latin America

During our period of graduate study, one of us planned an extended trip to Central America in order to strengthen his Spanish language skills and reading competencies while collecting material for a potential dissertation project on sustainable development. Although the library contained millions of volumes that covered every

nuance required to write a dissertation, it was devoid of real-life experience. A naïve student, armed with little more than a literature review and USGS satellite images, visited his supervisor who rightly questioned the research objective and asked why he should endorse a trip that seemingly lacked academic substance or cultural understanding. In retrospect, he correctly suggested that the research proposal was weak and would benefit from additional readings and one reading in particular. To strengthen the proposed study, he recommended revisiting the literature and urged a reading of Freire's (2000) seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

Freire's use of the terms, oppressor and oppressed, had an immediate impact because his concepts seemed very familiar and resonated closely with personal experience. Recalling political science readings, Freire had obviously borrowed heavily from Karl Marx in analyzing the political situation in Latin America. As Schugurensky (1998) correctly argues, Freire's ideas, for the most part, are not necessarily new or even original. However, in some respect, this was one great attraction we had to Freire's philosophy. He successfully integrated various traditions of philosophy that seemed far too abstract and combined them to make historic philosophical concepts exceptionally contemporary and relevant.

For some people, the understanding that Freire is not entirely original might come as a surprise—in fact, as we see in our Chapter 4 examination of Marx, there is little in philosophy generally that is entirely original in derivation. But Freire's intellectual work is not devalued by his use of others' ideas and, in fact, his ability to synthesize ideas may be his greatest philosophical strength. For example, Freire used oppressor and oppressed repeatedly throughout his writings and its origins parallel the use from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed" (Marx & Engels, 2001, p. 47). Marx's language highlighting repression from ancient Greece to the mid 1800s resonated with Freire in Brazil during his lifetime as Freire's language does with us in contemporary North America. The repeated foibles and burgeoning injustices of capitalism remain the greatest moral challenge facing humankind.

If the professor refused to endorse the new research proposal and the trip to Central America, then he was in fact an impediment to ontological freedom and educational agency! In our early interpretation of his writings, Freire provided a powerful weapon for intellectual freedom against institutional tyranny. Up to this point in our schooling experiences, education was more about instrumental learning and us resisting authority in typically self-destructive ways than it was exploring, creating, or challenging ideas and social conventions.

School embraced a lord/vassal relationship whereby the vassal, or student, was obliged to repeat the teachers' claims of what and whose knowledge mattered. In retrospect, an initial reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* proved largely self-serving and, in an Orwellian sense, one position of power was simply replaced by another. In other words, Freire's ideas, to some extent, were used to exploit and coerce the professor. The oppressed became the oppressor, the very point about revolutions that worried Freire. Somehow the reciprocal and dialogical arguments embraced

by Freire were absent in our early and unsophisticated analysis of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Perhaps in hindsight, the dissertation committee member was far more astute than at first glance. Maybe the supervisor saw potential in a graduate student who might grow and learn from a Central American experience. Obviously, he was a person of considerable hope and great wisdom by even suggesting the reading of Freire in the first place.

While in Central America and removed from the experiential void of the university library, many of Freire's observations about his Latin American experiences became far more visual, tactile, and salient. For example, many people were unable to purchase basic food necessities in countries where agricultural products are primary exports and the national economic lifeblood. Living conditions were precarious at best for most working-class people in cities and rural areas. Indigenous people lived in isolated slum communities under constant attack by first-world development. The first-world's cultural imperialists arrived in mass to convince indigenous people of a better way of life by accepting the capitalist promise of false generosity. Sadly, it was as if the conquistadors had left and returned as multinational corporations.

The inequitable relationship between owners of production and workers was palpable. Five hundred years of attack on native culture had left an indelible mark on the indigenous people's consciousness. From these and other observations, we quickly recognized the unjust living conditions and social arrangements that highlight Freire's loathing and criticism of neoliberalism's physical and psychological violence against Latin America. His critical analysis of social and historical reality provided a lens through which to consider the structural forces of neoliberalism, and this lens remained with us throughout our subsequent professional and personal lives. Since then, we have realized that neoliberalism's violence exists everywhere, including the classroom, and Freire's pedagogy provided the groundwork for further and more substantive criticism. His work may not afford a complete roadmap to intellectual and political equality but it does provide an important initial tool to criticize social reality and help teachers and students become political and transformative agents.

Contemporary neoliberal capitalism has little respect for the idea of a nation state. Marx once observed that the working class has no country. Countries are for capital not people. Democracy is simply a slogan representing in reality a multinational or global form of economic colonialism and military imperialism. As third-world political leaders attract foreign investment, they begin a process of long-term indebtedness to multinational corporations. Zinn (2003) maintains that during the 1970s, an unusually active era of repression and oppression around the globe, several American corporations and banks generated 40 percent of their net profit outside the United States. Thus, the natural resources of developing countries became a primary source of corporate exploitation and oppression. In what Zinn calls classic imperialism, natural resources that should have generated domestic profit actually led to third-world poverty as multinational corporations seized their resources and exploited cheap labor. In many ways, the essence of democracy, its leadership, was

sold to the highest bidder or local warlord while generations of working-class people were merely thrust into long-term economic bondage.

The Costa Rican Experience

The research trip to Costa Rica proved invaluable in drawing practical parallels between Freire's observations on neoliberal violence and the actual lived experience of people. The impact of global capitalism, with its exploitive and colonizing tendencies, was visible throughout all of Central America during the 1990s and Costa Rica in particular. Costa Rica, about one-third the size of Kentucky, was hit particularly hard because of its small size and limited resources. Long before this research trip, however, government leaders made a series of economic decisions that cost Costa Ricans their entire life savings and destroyed their livelihoods. During this trip, the Costa Rican national banking system collapsed much like the contemporary global banking situation but on a significantly smaller scale. Although the situation was smaller in scope, people still suffered immeasurably and were justifiably angry and frustrated. Across the country, people were victimized by events prompted by corporate decision making and were naturally infuriated about the loss of their savings and devaluation of their currency. They were victims of the industrialized nations and world lending institution regulations that conjointly operated to maintain their poverty. Obviously, the collapsing banking institutions, corporate welfare, and human suffering have a hauntingly familiar ring with the current global economic crisis prompted by banking and other financial interests.

In 2009, then, many parallels existed between the current world recession and the 1990 economic problems in Costa Rica. Again, these parallels are the primary reason we find Freire's critical pedagogy so timely and relevant in contemporary history. In Costa Rica, the National Bank's collapse was due to corporate cronyism and the special appointment of unskilled but influential people to key fiscal management positions. The only banking qualifications held by these workers were donations to party leader campaigns. As a result, bad loans and poor investments forced the National Bank's closure with the poorest investors the biggest losers.

Once again, Costa Rican political leaders' decisions based on neoliberal policies favoring foreign corporations had a deleterious impact on the working classes. Such situations are not isolated events in Central and Latin America. Throughout the second half of the 1900s, Brazil, Peru, and Chile were continually subjected to similar scenarios of boom and bust, hyperinflation, and political double dealings, and corruption. It was within these contexts that Freire sought to liberate people from neoliberalism's oppression and injustice, and encourage people to become politically active to gain a voice in their nation's policy making. He hoped that they would oppose and reinvent the corporate-controlled economic system through critical analysis of the social class antagonisms they confronted.

Economic analysts such as Shallat (1989) suggested the economic problem in Costa Rica was caused by a situation created by the United States to thwart socialist rebels in Costa Rica's northern and southern neighbors, Panama and Nicaragua.

The US approach to crush socialism and its sympathizers by economic means was not new. President Truman began a communist witch-hunt in the 1940s. Throughout Latin America, the US has continually used political oligarchs and their militaries to quell socialist movements, an approach that has continued unabated over the years. For example, the US supported such corrupt dictators as Batista in Cuba, Pinochet in Chile, and Noriega in Panama without even raising a moral eyebrow at home. It presently supports totalitarian regimes in Saudi Arabia and China on purely economic/corporate grounds with a complete blind eye to terrible human rights abuses committed by both countries.

In Costa Rica, the United States accused rebels of laundering illegal drug profits through the banks. As in many countries, professional banking skills are not required of high-ranking executives. Political patronage is often more important and many high-ranking banking positions are largely political appointments and include the appointment of ex-politicians. For example, all of Costa Rica's economic ministers are forced to follow World Bank dictates. The same is true in other nations as well.

The World Bank guaranteed loans to Costa Rican officials if they followed specific policy guidelines, most of which favored business interests and corporate elites. Repeatedly, the Costa Rican working classes were subjected to recurring historical cycles of boom and bust creating complete fiscal instability. In response to the Costa Rican economic crisis, international lenders recommended cutting social services to curb government expenses and restore international confidence in the country's financial institutions. This particular economic policy is not uncommon in such instances. In the current global recession, large and small businesses trim their workforces literally cutting to bits the lives of workers in an effort to protect or improve stockholder profits. Government leaders flock to help Wall Street rather than Main Street while convincing the general public the strategy is in everyone's long- and short-term interests.

Whether in Central America, Canada, the US or any nation, when capitalism falls on hard times, the working classes are the first to feel the impact because they are unable to purchase basic goods and services much less discretionary items. Such austere situations are amplified by shortsighted international and domestic policies that initially cut services to the poorest and most dispossessed people because of their lack of political voice and social influence. The downturn in consumer spending means corporate profits fall even further and the violence against workers in the form of economic marginalization accelerates. The effects brought on by loans from international lending institutions, although affording short-term benefits to corporate interests by freeing capital, were devastating to the working classes.

One of the most troubling recommendations imposed by world lending institutions was the proposed privatization of Costa Rica's national electric company, a measure that immediately sparked workers' concerns across the country over high electric costs. In the modern world, electricity is of course not an extravagance; it is a basic necessity. Privatization of the national electric company in this case turned over an important national resource to corporate interests whose primary interests are capital generation for wealthy investors. In small and poor countries,

unemployed workers have a significant impact on the national economy and the national psyche. Around the globe, governmental response to neoliberal calls for less public ownership has been to sell public assets to generate capital and turn profit-making public enterprise over to the private sector. Proper management in the interest of the public is less important than corporate profit. In the US, for example, a Spanish firm leased the rights to a toll road for 75 years. This arrangement has since been called into question by public outcries of shoddy management practices. Consistent with Freire's experiences in Brazil, mismanagement in Costa Rica caused the nation to go from an economic bonanza back to third-world status in a matter of only 20 years.

The modern world's industrialization brings with it many social, political, and ecological implications. In one respect, a nation's identity or national psyche is explicitly tied to industrialization. A modern nation is perceived as forward looking and industrious when focused on economic growth as the primary objective. A nonindustrialized country's natural resources and human capital are raw materials for the world market and corporate global utilization. An industrialized nation's people are viewed as educated and rely on science and technology to liberate them from potential problems and mundane work. As an antithesis, third-world nations sell their natural resources and do not add value by converting raw goods into finished products. Therefore, education serves little purpose in the third world because it is an expensive luxury—too expensive for the working classes whose role is reduced to unskilled labor.

History reveals that education may lead to the dismantling of colonial empires. Then, colonizers' attitudes change toward education because they realize working classes benefit when they become literate. Workers realize the poverty they face is not their fault and become politically active in ways that transform employment conditions. Although Freire's pedagogy was largely directed at third-world people for precisely this purpose, it is also applicable in the contemporary industrialized world, particularly within the current economic and political climates. Freire saw critical learning as a tool of liberation for all workers that afforded them the opportunity to live a dignified life too often reserved for the wealthy or politically elite. Accordingly, the business class viewed Freire's pedagogy as the tip of a potentially dangerous spear that could be used by neoliberalism's opponents to thwart their economic wealth and political influence. To this group, Freire's call for social justice was a subversive force that must be quelled by any means available.

One way of understanding the experience of developing countries is to consider it in terms of production and ownership. Much of the nonindustrialized world's economy is based on exporting natural resources and agricultural products to industrialized countries where value is added by transforming raw goods into finished products. These products are then sold to consumers where the excess value invested by cheap labor is turned into profit. A lion's share of these profits goes to brokers, distributors, and investors. In some cases, small producers find alternative outlets for goods but most agricultural products are produced for export. Certainly, food crops reach cities but most goods leave the country on multinational cargo ships for sale and consumption elsewhere. These exported goods are sold in the world

marketplace where the net gain in value has no or little impact on the exporting nation's standard of living. The capital that does return is used to pay interest, not the principal, on international lending agencies' loans. The result is an endless cycle of debt to foreign lenders and multinational corporations. Such transactions keep third-world nations and their people in a state of political and economic servitude, or "oppression" to employ Freire's term.

This situation is obviously not unique to Latin America or among other poor nations around the globe. Such nations attract foreign investment primarily because of relaxed environmental laws, cheap labor, and political ties to the first world. The economic growth in China and India, the engines of the new capitalism, are dependent on an endless supply of cheap labor. Many of these workers are subjected to inhumane working conditions while multinational corporations accrue tremendous profits. No matter how government officials from these countries portray their nations, people are routinely subjected to domestic economic development policies that undermine their quality of life.

Workers from developed countries have first-hand experience of neoliberalism's failures as well. In countries such as Canada and the US the standard of living of working-class people is reduced (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009) and their purchasing power is significantly undercut. Such global policies affect the ability of workers to provide basic goods and services for themselves and their families. Freire understood that such policies are immoral and practically unacceptable since we live in an era of high production with sophisticated means of distribution. There is no reason other than moral failure why poverty prevails and continues to grow in many countries around the world.

Latin America offers a troubling microcosm of social stratification in the world with two very distinct classes: the "haves" (what Freire would refer to as the oppressors) and those who have often internalized the values of their oppressors, the oppressed. The "haves" make decisions for the oppressed but these decisions are inevitably made in the short-term interests of protecting their own corporate profits and political power. The have-nots, or the oppressed, although they internalize the values of their oppressors, live an ideologically manipulated existence that reproduces widespread poverty and servitude for the benefit of the wealthy minority. The poor adopt capitalist values and ambitions that are encouraged by the social reality, or economy, created by their oppressors.

As a result, the working class is mired in the reproduction of the status quo, a socially constructed reality buttressed by the forces of ideology, an existential concern repeatedly expressed by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Since that initial trip to Costa Rica, Freire's words and ideas have become a life study and, more importantly, a way of life and a focus of our teaching. Like Paulo Freire, we are drawn to the classroom each day by hope and love for our students. We believe in the pedagogy of hope, and resist the cynicism and fatalism of neoliberal culture. We know that we cannot legitimately claim to practice such pedagogy unless we can help our students to move beyond emotional despair and political paralysis. We must help them imagine a world in which social justice and existential freedom ring true for every single individual.

Constructivism, Capitalism, and Consciousness

Within a constructivist framework, every person's epistemic perspective is affected by her/his lived experiences. We live, we love, we laugh, we work, and we cry. Human actions and interactions within their respective historical and social contexts shape their consciousness and moral judgments. Kincheloe et al. (2000) explain how this perspective differs from the traditional positivist approach:

> Modernist positivism claims to produce an objective science untainted by modernist values (for example the curriculum is value free, disinterested, merely the delineation of knowledge we have discovered). The new paradigm makes no claim to objectivity because it celebrates human ways of knowing that are logical but also intuitive, emotional and empathetic. Such an approach to knowledge production (epistemology) is often referred to as *constructivism* in that the world is "constructed" or brought forth in the process of knowing. Learning becomes not as much an act of memorizing previously discovered information as an act of creating knowledge and ordering our own experiences to achieve deeper understanding. (p. 66)

The epistemic value of this perspective is appreciating how social reality and the claims that emerge from it are constructed claims rather than objective truths about the world. This understanding opens up new space for alternative constructions and, in a Freirean sense, pushes forward social realities that include greater measures of social justice and equality.

Although each person is vastly different and unique, we also share common hopes and values and, conversely, we often disagree. All humans share birth and death as immutable physical realities but the conscious parts, the lived experiences, in between birth and death differ radically, as do our interpretations of social reality. An individual born into the wealth of upper-class America is apt to have a far different perspective from someone born into the slums of Kolkata.

In a constructed monolithic social reality, however, we predictably share many similar experiences framed by historical, political, and ideological contexts. Neoliberalism is a widely shared ideological and historical experience. For example, we are North American, one from the US and the other from Canada but we have a shared capitalist experience and shared negative attitudes toward capitalism. We loathe this economic system because of its immoral and violent tendencies that are a dominant effect of its design. Our constructed social experiences and subsequent moral judgments have led us to conclude that neoliberalism is a system that must not only be intellectually deconstructed, but physically dismantled as well. From its ashes we may construct a new social reality that reflects Freire's values and objectives.

Our respective interpretations of historical and ideological events contain many similarities. In particular, we share the view that corporate proponents of neoliberal ideology have been in a constant state of war against the working class and alternative economic perspectives for almost 40 years. Our shared criticism of neoliberalism is based on specific contradictions found in first-world foreign policy. For example, the industrialized world has promoted a homogenized democracy and

capitalism at the expense of third-world nations' people and the human right to self-determination. In many respects, neoliberal democracy is disingenuous and colonial, cloaked in the disguise of political freedom. The first-world promotes "democracy," often at the end of a gun barrel, to protect and further neoliberal interests rather than advance the self-determination of the working classes. Indeed, democracy in the neoliberal economy has been used as a spoon to stir the pot of capitalist growth and not as an emancipatory political revolution to empower the socially marginalized and dispossessed. Democracy has become a military and colonizing excuse and justification rather than a political system advancing the right to self-determination.

US leaders in particular have failed on countless occasions to protect Main Street interests rather than Wall Street business profit margins. According to OpenSecrets.org, the top 25 members of the three branches of US government had personal assets between $65,000,000 and $500,000,000 in 2007. Jane Harman (D-CA) was the wealthiest member. Whose interests are being represented by a system of government controlled by the wealthiest members of a country? Indeed, with such wealth at stake, no one should be surprised by the lengths some people would go to protect it. Throughout its history, the US government has aggressively and repeatedly beaten its plowshares into swords and rattled them, or worse, throughout the world in the name of democracy and capitalism—one only need look at the continued conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as contemporary examples. Thousands of young Americans, such as in Vietnam, have died needlessly under the guise of patriotic sacrifice when in fact their deaths serve the interests of the corporate class and the perpetuation of neoliberal capitalism. Freire (1998b) observes that

> It is truly difficult to make democracy. Democracy, like any dream, is not made with spiritual words, but with reflection and practice. It is not what I say that says I am a democrat, that I am not a racist or machista, but what I do. What I say must not be contradicted by what I do. (p. 67)

Freire's Brazil did not escape the wrath of the US Government. Brazil's political oligarchy was economically and politically tied to the US government and its neoliberal agenda. Opponents to hegemonic capitalist ideology were regularly subjected to clandestine military operations or governed by puppet regimes. Latin America in general was subjected to this US-dominated ideological and political control.

The neoliberal discourse contains democratic language such as "freedom" and "elections" extolling capitalism's imagined virtues while simultaneously and underhandedly mounting covert operations to control the political and economic landscapes of other nations. All the while, many poor US citizens, a disproportionate number of whom are members of ethnic minorities are ironically and routinely denied the same economic hopes and possibilities promoted by US politicians in other countries around the world. The reality of this contradiction is hardly egalitarian or democratic even in a domestic sense considering approximately 25 percent of US citizens are economically marginalized and considered by sociologists as members of the "underclass" (Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2005).

In a representative democracy, politicians are elected to serve the people yet in actuality, they serve multinational corporate interests. Western politicians from both

Canada and the US open and stabilize world markets under military, economic, or political oppression while wrapping their actions in an absurd caricature of democracy, moral rectitude, and service. The Canadian government is currently facing allegations of turning over Afghan prisoners to the authorities knowing they would be tortured and abused. The government's response has been to prorogue, or suspend, parliament to avoid accountability. The US government's systematic use of torture in both Guantanamo Bay and Iraq destroys any pretense of moral superiority as justification for war.

If the US government is involved in promoting democracy in other countries, you can be certain that business interests are behind the drive to democratize. Democracy is primarily promoted in politically unfriendly countries with vendible natural resources such as Iraq and Iran, while the totalitarian political environments of "friendly" countries such as Saudi Arabia are entirely ignored. Any criticism of the Saudi Arabian government by its citizens can result in arrest, torture, or worse.

In spite of our disdain for neoliberal democracy, however, we must be careful of course not to equate widespread government moral corruption with the frequent goodwill of the American and Canadian people. Both nations' citizens have often demonstrated goodness, generousness, and resourcefulness at home and around the world. Nevertheless, US political leaders, acting on behalf of business interests and with political expediency, have employed carrot and stick international diplomacy, particularly in Latin America for many decades. For example, since 1823 and the birth of the imperialistic Monroe Doctrine, US leaders have influenced the western hemisphere under the assumption it has the "Divine" right to determine and influence economic and political ideals of other sovereign nations. As Creole leaders broke their bonds of servitude with Europe, American political and business leaders took advantage of the situation to fill their coffers by creating new forms of exploitation. In Latin America, US interests found pro-business supporters who would wage counterinsurgency wars to control revolutionary thought to protect financial assets. The loss of human life meant absolutely nothing to these same interests—only profit margins and the required political stability. If Latin American leaders did not follow US dictates to secure the latter, they were on some occasions forcefully deposed or even murdered by US government operatives.

Since the 1800s, US policy in the area has remained unchanged. Chile is a prime example of a country where US influence and insurgency led to the assassination of a democratically elected government leader, Salvador Allende. In the 1970s, Allende was a Marxist socialist who drew the ire of then US President Richard Nixon. With CIA assistance, a military coup was launched, ironically on September 11th that forcefully ousted and murdered Allende, and led to the reign of terror dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Soon after, Operation Condor was launched with the intended aim of eliminating socialist influences in the southern cone of South America. Pinochet and his military henchmen launched a decades-long reign of brutality and murder on behalf of the nation's business interests. Like many South Americans, Freire was forced to leave Chile during these events after his self-imposed exile from Brazil. The historical reality and social relations between North and South America are prime examples of the violence Freire and others have endured at the

hands of US policy, an instrument designed to serve the interests of the nation's economic elite at the expense of virtually everyone else.

Historical Consciousness Raising

Our experience in the classroom suggests many teachers and students do not have adequate knowledge to understand the politicizing of the public education curriculum. Our above account of Central American exploitation at the hands of the US is not part of any public education or teacher education curricular document we know about. History as a discipline of study in public education is confined to the liberal arts dustbin or reduced to mere mnemonic regurgitation where dates and selected abstracted facts substitute for in-depth contextual understanding. Young social science teachers are often poorly equipped to teach history from an informed perspective because of the limited depth and breadth of their studies in the university. When teachers are unable to draw parallels between the past and present, they relegate themselves to teaching facts directly from textbooks and often chosen for their noncontroversial nature. Facts are delivered as isolated events or dates embraced by test makers or government educational agencies:

> The daily lives of educators attest to the power of the forces, as teachers teach subject matter that has been broken into an ordered sequence of separate tasks and "factoids". Trained to follow a pretest, drillwork, post-test instructional model, teachers efficiently follow a scientific pedagogy that insidiously embedded itself as part of their "cultural logic" – a logic which serves to tame their pedagogical imagination. No thought is necessary, it is just common sense to assume that if one wants to teach somebody something, you simply break the information into separate pieces, go over the pieces until the learner has mastered them, then test him or her to make sure the pieces have been "learned." (Kincheloe, 1993, p. 8)

Facts, presented as immutable truths, leave no room for questions, discussion, or dialogue. Delivered in this fashion, history is concrete and not subjected to criticism or revisionist perspectives that challenge the mythmaking so common in the popular public version of past events. We are not surprised when students tell us that they dislike history because of its concreteness and find it uninteresting or boring.

In many respects, history in particular and social sciences in general are second-class subjects in the sphere of neoliberal ideology for several reasons. There is a general assumption that natural science can save us from or correct our past mistakes. In the post-Sputnik era, hard sciences are the primary subjects that teachers use to interpret and explain the world. As time passes, students and teachers embrace this technical-rational curriculum and transmit its values to subsequent generations. However, both the logic and the morality are flawed.

For example, we have the technological know-how to build nuclear power generators but we do not have the know-how to fix them when confronted with Chernobyl type events. In a time of crisis, science is supposed to save us from our mistakes, but more often than not it has led to environmental and moral catastrophes. We are not opposed to science in the main—far from it—but a world reduced to its constituent parts via scientific reductionism is intellectually isolated and sanitized

from the normative judgments affecting the kind of education and society we create. This observation is especially true when the methods of natural science, supposedly objective and disinterested, are applied to understanding human actions that are always profoundly laden with meaning. Under such conditions we enter the worrisome realm of scientism, an approach to understanding and explaining human interaction in entirely instrumental terms that undermine the debate and discussion essential for moral improvement. As such, scientism, as a force to quiet dissent, is yet another brick in the wall of neoliberal ideology.

Since science has almost fully captured the curriculum of both public schools and higher education, arbitrary and artificial barriers define and isolate schools of thought, people are labeled and categorized, and existential possibilities of personal and social transformation are denied because of this monocurriculum. When people are denied their historical past, they accept prevailing attitudes and values as inevitable and as an impenetrable reality. Social reality is naturalized through pseudo-scientific claims of "truth." Freire was not surprised that the working masses do not question these education practices because ideology is such a powerful influence on human consciousness. Science is generally considered the standard for epistemic justification and when social reality is supported by "scientific" claims, the general public is easily convinced of its merits. After all, who are we to question science?

From Freire's perspective, history is of course dynamic and subject to agency. Yet those who control the contemporary curriculum deny history's dynamic nature; they present instead a distorted view of history. The oppressors understand and deliver history as concrete; that is, the ruling class controls the content that provides an example of the ideals and values furthering their interests. But social reality is understood by examining historical events that shape current conditions and asking students about their interpretations and seeking out alternative explanations for historical events. Therefore, a critical analysis of social reality based on historical movement and revisionism becomes a powerful weapon against the naïve reality advanced by neoliberalism. The latter incorrectly suggests inevitable progress results from science and capitalism, an observation clearly illustrated by the historical record of both. By exposing the force of human agency in creating prevailing social conditions, students can come to see themselves as agents of history rather than its mere objects. History is something we do, not something done to us:

> The real roots of the political nature of education are to be found in the educatability of the human person. This educatability, in turn, is grounded in the radical unfinishedness of the human condition and in the consciousness of this unfinished state. Being unfinished and therefore historical, conscious of our unfinishedness we are necessarily ethical because we have to decide. To take options. Our historical unfinishedness demands it. It opens up space that we can occupy with ethically grounded attitudes, which in practice can be subverted. We can only be ethical as I have said before, if we are able to be unethical. (Freire 1998a, p. 100)

Industrialist and assembly line inventor Henry Ford once suggested that, "history is more or less bunk." As a pioneer and leading US industrialist, his attitude toward history should not come as a surprise. Ford employees and other workers across the

industrial landscape may have a vastly different view of the world and of their role as workers if they understood that history favored those with power and influence, and routinely oppressed those who lived under the former's dictates. In other words, the ruling classes that include the Fords must control the "facts" of history to control the consciousness of workers. The marginalization of history in contemporary public education undermines the critical analysis of social reality and the envisioned political possibilities by workers.

When the history classroom is dehistoricized, student appreciation and understanding about social reality is limited. There is no place for student or worker agency since history is always made by powerful others through military conquests or international politics. The history of work is once again determined by the elites' portrayal of social reality actually comprised of a series of myths. These myths include workers are treated fairly and with compassion; they are paid fairly for their labor and live contented working lives. Alternatively, a critical pedagogue's historical analysis of work experience is vastly different than the historical analysis afforded by hegemonic elites. The history of work is one of exploitation, even slavery, where workers are abused and treated as chattel to the point where many die to secure some measure of social justice and economic return for the work they perform.

Neoliberals must find ways to deny any measure of political agency on behalf of the masses. For example, workers did not die for rights, but were afforded them by generous corporate owners who always had the best interests of their workers at heart. The truth is inevitably masked behind the myth of capitalist or false generosity. Studying history in a critical fashion is an indispensable tool in a critical educator's arsenal because every single student has a history. In a politicized and critical classroom, history is not a mnemonic exercise that tests student memory skills about who is buried in Grant's Tomb or when the War of 1812 was fought. A historicized classroom is an active classroom based on personal experiences with the intent of exposing students to alternative political possibilities by examining critically various historical events. For example, asking why atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a critical exercise, while explaining the "reasons" for the actions to students is a blatant act of indoctrination.

Freire was adamant that critical classroom opportunities can lead to the improvement of all people's lives but there is always a price to be paid for challenging dominant attitudes and values. Henry Ford employed a company "goon squad" whose purpose was to control workers' lives and actions through fear and intimidation. When students understand how human action was central to advancing workers' rights, they may also appreciate their own capacity to invoke social change and resist regimes of vocational oppression and abuse. This is the fundamental value of historical analysis and the ideological reason it is replaced by "social studies" within contemporary schooling.

Freire faced actual threats from the ruling elites for politicizing SESI education classes. The program's financial backers recognized Freire's potential challenge to dominant class values and perceived him as a threat to their interests. Neoliberal corporate captains stood to lose the most when workers under Freire's guidance

questioned the political leadership's legitimacy and authority. In no uncertain terms, Freire was told to change his social and educational philosophies or face an end to funding of education programs that he administered in Brazil. The business leaders' willingness to shutdown critical education programs revealed the true motives behind their programs. Such programs are created to demonstrate ruling class "generosity" to the oppressed rather than to improve workers' lives. These programs are designed to pacify those who have less while promoting the elites' supposed virtue and generosity. They also instill in the oppressed that their suffering is the result of some personal deficit that can be corrected by the oppressors.

In many respects, people accept false generosity, whether in the form of food banks or employability skill instruction, as the only legitimate alternative for survival. Many of our friends and colleagues engage in such acts of "kindness" often as a way to feel good about their own lives. There is nothing wrong with their actions per se, but they are woefully incomplete since, as Freire observed, any assistance to the oppressed must be accompanied by transformative education that targets changes to the structural injustices leading to oppression. Generosity is a virtue to the extent it seeks to transform the causes of suffering or hardship—failure to achieve this objective simply perpetuates the suffering.

Poverty certainly has a way of occupying one's time in the daily search for basic needs. The ideological messages found in social programs to assist the poor are both tacit and overt. From numerous perspectives, people are encouraged to adopt a range of capitalist myths including that hard work and ability create opportunities and generate personal wealth. However, many people at the bottom of the economic ladder work far harder and longer than those at the top, but earn a mere fraction of the income enjoyed by the managerial class. The capitalist message also reifies the oppression of others as a "normal" condition and suggests that economic class stratification reflects an inevitable social order. As Kincheloe et al. (2000) observe, "Any attempt to dismiss class as an American issue should be exposed for what it is: an instrumental fiction designed to preserve the status quo by pointing to the presumed laziness and incompetence of the poor as the reasons for their poverty" (p. 356).

Freire was adamant that through a critical analysis of experience, people could assess social reality to envision possible alternatives to existing circumstances. Thus, the importance of critical reflection as an essential element of potential political change is a common thread woven throughout the fabric of Freire's pedagogy:

> The starting point for such an analysis must be a critical comprehension of man as a being who exists in and with the world. Since the basic condition for the conscientização is that its agent must be subject (i.e. a conscious being), conscientização like education, is specifically and exclusively a human process. It is as conscious beings that men are not only in the world, but in the world, together with other men. (Freire, 1998b, p. 68)

As we suggested previously, ignorance of history does not merely constitute a foundational deficit in propositional knowledge. It creates a deficit of understanding in the existential possibilities of human action upon the world. When human lives

and social justice are at stake, ignorance of this historical reality is a luxury that no one can afford. Freire's emphasis on the critical analysis of social reality followed from his appreciation that the oppressed must understand their central role in generating change.

Throughout Latin American and the developing world more generally, a vast majority of people face daunting conditions of unjust social and political marginalization and oppression. But class warfare is, of course, as old as recorded history. Marx eloquently reminded us that, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" (Marx cited in Tucker, p. 473). Against this timeless social and political backdrop of class antagonisms, Freire's critical analysis of social injustice made him a notorious socialist. He developed a deep loathing for the neoliberal violence that fell against countless humans with catastrophic emotional and financial consequences.

Freire was far from an apologist for his socialist position—quite the contrary. From his critical perspective, he exposed the prevailing social and economic attitudes that confined and continue to confine a majority of the world's people to poverty or second-class status. Freire concluded that neoliberalism is an inhumane economic and social system because people suffer physical, emotional, and intellectual dehumanization for capital's sake. Importantly, the oppressed are not alone in their dehumanization. Freire clearly pointed out that people who dehumanize others are dehumanized as well by their very act of dehumanization. There are many tales of the wealthy and powerful developing a self-loathing that even leads some to take their own lives. The lyrics from Simon and Garfunkel's Richard Cory nicely illustrate this point:

> The papers print his picture almost everywhere he goes:
> Richard Cory at the opera, Richard Cory at a show.
> And the rumor of his parties and the orgies on his yacht!
> Oh, he surely must be happy with everything he's got.
>
> But I work in his factory
> And I curse the life I'm living
> And I curse my poverty
> And I wish that I could be,
> Oh, I wish that I could be,
> Oh, I wish that I could be
> Richard Cory.
>
> He freely gave to charity, he had the common touch,
> And they were grateful for his patronage and thanked him very much,
> So my mind was filled with wonder when the evening headlines read:
> Richard Cory went home last night and put a bullet through his head.

No one really "wins" with neoliberal capitalism but some people, for better or worse, inevitably get rich.

Brazil's geographical vastness, with its sprawling urban, rural, and cultural landscapes, makes it particularly troublesome to provide basic services with any degree of uniformity. This includes public education. During Freire's youth, Brazil did not have a uniform education system in large part because education projects are expensive and typically supported through public tax revenues. Since a majority of the

Brazilian people lived in poverty, they could not afford to support compulsory education. Conversely, since a minority controlled Brazil's wealth, they did not need to educate people for employment in Brazil's abundant unskilled labor force. Brazil's people have been plagued by decades of hyperinflation and corresponding cycles of underemployment. Furthermore, Brazil's high birthrate and corresponding low average wage provided a labor force advantageous for corporate profit. Brazilians who could afford education for their children sent them to private schools. As a child, Freire himself attended private school and his poor treatment there contributed to his values and attitudes toward achieving humanistic educational approaches.

Within the developed world's contemporary neoliberal capitalist paradigm, education is largely reduced to instrumental credentialism, a sort of Durkheim-modeled structuralism taken to its worst possible conclusion. Indeed, to employ the term "corporate fascism," where all individuals are expected to relinquish their independence in favor of serving corporate needs, would not constitute much of a stretch. Individuals, especially students and workers, are asked to forego their existential aspirations to enhance corporate welfare.

Freire understood very well that literacy, in and of itself, does not constitute an emancipatory force to create a politically informed and active citizenry. The main purpose of public schools within capitalism is to form a functionally literate labor pool that responds to external directives without question and behaves in a socially cohesive fashion. Literacy, as we explain later in this text, can achieve this end very effectively. Resistance to the corporate hegemony is to be avoided at all costs and, as Foucault points out, neoliberal citizens discipline themselves to prevailing social norms (Foucault, 1991). Students are considered empty vessels waiting to be filled with the type of knowledge required by industry and nationalists. The dominant culture has taught the lower classes to prepare for a predetermined "social reality." Students as future workers are correspondingly reduced to willing, if manipulated, victims of banking education.

Banking education does have its place. It can be an effective teaching method for transferring facts if the objective is simply factoid transmission. Training teaches people to act within specific scenarios without question. Among other institutions, militaries use this approach regularly when training people to act without thinking or questioning commanding officers. Soldiers, it is presupposed, must act without resistance and trust the knowledge and judgment of their "superiors." This is precisely the type of education received by most students. "Training" is the appropriate term for this pedagogic method but education and training are very different learning practices with very different effects on students. Education is a democratic learning experience whereas banking education, indoctrination, and training undercut the rational agency of the learner.

Summary

Freire understood that in a democratic learning environment, critical historical analysis has the potential to create change in the social superstructure by helping students understand political construction and the role of human agency in

generating social change. He paid a heavy personal price for conveying this message to the people of Latin America. Our own connection with Freire may have occurred formally at university, but we understood his frustration with social injustice on a deeply personal level far earlier in our lives.

As evidence of political change, we believe that the individual and social transformation behind the 2008 election of Barack Obama offers an example of hope. His election suggests that educators and activist social policies can have substantial sociological and political impacts. Since *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, critical educators have weakened America's Eurocentric racist perspective in the courts and in the classrooms. Obama's election suggests that critical pedagogy has not only provided some people with a sense of hope and human agency, but also the will to direct and participate in political change. Obama's political policies and agenda to date unfortunately also indicate the neoliberal dragon that troubled Freire so deeply still remains to be slain.

We have suggested that Freire's ideas are an amalgam of philosophical ideas he contemporized. He successfully synthesized complex philosophies into something more than their constituent components—this masterfully created whole clearly is more than the sum of its parts. Our goal in the following chapters is to help readers understand and appreciate the philosophic complexity and literary richness of Freire's arguments. From experience, we know that many teachers in training and those in practice do not have adequate backgrounds in philosophy, a background that would advance their own criticality and promote a better understanding of Freire. Consequently, they are unable to appreciate Freire's position beyond a cursory application of his concepts based on a superficial understanding. In the forthcoming chapters we hope to rectify that shortcoming, and further the cause of critical pedagogy and expand the appreciation for Freire in the process.

Freire's death and that of our dear friend Joe Kincheloe did not spell the end of critical pedagogy; the loss of these two seminal figures has ushered in the beginning of a new and urgent phase in our disciplinary history. It is up to the rest of us, in whatever fashion possible, to continue their legacy of hope and social justice.

Chapter 2
Metaphors, Politics, and Biography

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore Freire's writings and his use of colorful metaphors to strengthen his narrative. Metaphors create shared meaning and paint wonderfully rich descriptive images of situations and experiences. For example, Freire described the harsh Brazilian culture and education system that helped shape his personal and educational viewpoints through the use of metaphors. He portrayed education as a technical-rational system designed to protect upper-class interests and selected a particularly abusive figure as representative of this objective.

In this chapter, we also discuss Freire's biography not as history per se but in relation to particular historical events that shaped his life, consciousness, and pedagogy. If you are looking for an all-inclusive chronology or traditional biography, you will not find it in the following pages. There are many articles and books already devoted to the various nuances of his personal life. The people who lived and worked with him can provide readers with accurate chronologic and personal information about his life. Our objective is to create a broader historical image and orientation that includes some of his experiences in conjunction with the social, historical, and political environments he confronted throughout his lifetime in Brazil and around the world. We explore metaphor as a means to understand Freire's ideas, objectives, and ontological perspective.

Philosophy in Teacher Education

Freire was an avid reader and developed a writing style that some people appreciate and others deplore. He was a prolific writer so we can only skim the surface of his voluminous and eclectic narratives in the following analysis. Nevertheless we hope to provide the reader some flavor of his ability to convey important messages about social justice through the use of rich language and shared experience. In the following pages, we also focus on his analysis and observations of historical events to reveal some forces that shaped his critical pedagogy.

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Freire often emphasized his friendship with bookstore owners and his affinity for philosophical texts. He spent "too many hours and too much money" (1996, p. 79) in bookstores and he always wanted to be in the stores when new book shipments arrived, particularly from overseas. It was in such situations that he encountered many intellectuals and developed his penchant for rich narrative. These readings exposed Freire to an eclectic mix of philosophical ideas and perspectives that directly impacted on his own intellectual development. These ideas provided Freire with a strong background in many philosophies that he would eventually apply in his own work. Torres (1994) describes the philosophical influences that shaped Freire's writing: "Freire has been influenced by a myriad of philosophical currents including phenomenology, existentialism, Christian personalism, humanist Marxism, and Hegelianism" (p. 186).

Without question, Freire's narratives illustrate an affinity for the written word and a sophisticated understanding of philosophical ideas ranging from ancient Greece to contemporary Europe. As we have suggested, this complexity of philosophies is problematic for many teachers or teachers in training who lack philosophy backgrounds or coursework. Philosophy and many other subjects in the Humanities have been under concerted attack in higher education over the last several decades. There is, of course, a neoliberal ideological advantage to be gained by the corporate hegemony in denying teachers access to alternative ideas and perspectives about society. These subjects create space for social exploration and critique rather than focusing on instrumental learning for labor market preparation. Hence, neoliberalism views them as problematic and superfluous.

From our own personal experience, we know education curricula typically consist of overpriced textbooks produced by high-volume publishers that only skim the surface of philosophical concepts. They turn complex philosophical ideas into a social "science" by constructing neat categories and making superficial connections between philosophical positions and schooling implications. Most publishers are for-profit businesses and their financial lifeblood comes from high-volume sales rather than the promotion of student understanding. Textbook publishing is generally an enterprise with a focus on profit—there is typically no interest in changing social and political consciousness. Therefore, textbook publishing houses are masters at trivializing concepts and ideas as part of their business strategy to appeal to teacher educators who lack background in specific subject matter such as philosophy, history, and sociology.

Teachers are certainly not to blame for curriculum omissions, or their limited understanding of philosophy and history. We are surprised by how many teacher education students have never even heard of Freire's critical pedagogy let alone the various philosophical concepts and ideas on which it is based. The ideas of Marx, when they are addressed at all in teacher education, are routinely misrepresented and distorted. The educational experience is technocratic—memorize and repeat—practices that many student teachers will adopt in their own classroom teaching. One thing is certain about student teachers: they will become masters of teaching "methods." From experience, we have seen firsthand that method classes dominate the curriculum at the expense of subject mastery. As Bill Ayers suggests, we

should be far less concerned with method than we are with helping students discover themselves and better understand the world they inhabit:

> Inside every student – from kindergarten through graduate school – lurks an implicit question, often unformed and unconscious, rarely spoken. It's a simple question on the surface, but a question that bubbles with hidden and surprising meanings, always yeasty, unpredictable, potentially volcanic: Who in the world am I? The student looks inward at the self, and simultaneously faces outward, toward the expanding circles of context. Who am I, in the world? (Ayers, 2004, p. 117)

Much of Freire's pedagogy is designed precisely to help students, both the oppressed and the oppressors, confront and answer questions of ultimate ontological importance. Who am I and how can I change the world?

Freire's style of prose drew both praise and criticism from admirers and detractors respectively. His work affords a refreshing change from many education texts but it also requires an extraordinarily careful and informed reading, or exegesis. Such a strategy is difficult to perform in teacher education classrooms of 100 or more students. Freire's most popular book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, requires more than one cursory reading to unravel its complex connections, ideas, and its potential for generating revolutionary social change. Of course, how many student teachers enjoy the luxury of reading a book more than once? Or even read a book once in any significant detail?

Certainly, many intellectual narratives require more than one cursory perusal to unlock the author's message, but Freire took readers to entirely new places. His words open many intellectual opportunities and bespeak of new personal and social possibilities for everyone who reads them. The depth and breadth of Freire's work requires substantial effort to understand the many philosophical ideas that he wound throughout his narrative to create his pedagogy. Most student teachers are quite simply denied this philosophical background. Kincheloe astutely observed how student teachers are denied the opportunity to explore the views of critical educators. Thus, the educational status quo is protected from critics, such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Maxine Greene, with their "agenda" and value judgments. Their critiques are not scientific; they are "mere opinions."

Freire managed to take many philosophical ideas, some of which are in ostensible conflict and create a contemporary philosophical pedagogy that captures the imagination of those hoping for a better world. Many student teachers confide in us that their reason for becoming a teacher is primarily altruistic. They do indeed hope to change the world for the better and are anxious to acquire the necessary tools to achieve that objective. Too often the present circumstances in teacher education that deny students access to transformative learning have a deleterious impact on this idealism. They subsequently confront difficult moral issues in education and are often forced to make personal choices about their pedagogic practice or become hopeless technically proficient cynics mired in the monolithic structure of compulsory state education that measures and sorts students instead of teaching them. As Kincheloe et al. (2000) explain, both teachers and students pay a heavy price for the resulting deskilling:

> The scientific management of teaching, with its accompanying deskilling and disempowerment, has initiated a vicious circle of harm to the profession. As teachers became deskilled they lost more and more autonomy. As they grew accustomed to the loss of autonomy, they were perceived to be incapable of self-direction. Prospective teachers learn to be supervised in courses that teach them to write meticulous behavioral objectives and lesson plans in an accepted format. (p. 238)

In a wonderful article by Ira Shor, *The Centrality of Beans: Remembering Paulo Freire*, Freire reiterated that he did not want others to emulate him or employ his education methods. He fully understood that a reproducible critical pedagogy also reproduces the status quo, the very problem he sought to avoid. Moreover, any experienced educator understands that no two classrooms are the same and no single "method" applies to all contexts. As teachers we adjust our "methods" constantly to fit the learning context and interests of our students.

Freire always expressed a tireless inclination to critically re-read his own words and revisit his complex philosophical ideas. He relied on critically reflective practice because he did not want to limit human potential by undermining the dynamic nature of classroom interaction. According to Shor (1998)

> But to those who wanted to sit at his feet and copy his words or actions, Paulo said, "the only way anyone has of applying their situation on any of the propositions I have made is precisely by redoing what I have done, that is, by not following me. In order to follow me it is essential not to follow me!" (p. 77)

We wish to be perfectly clear about Freire's pedagogic advise: If we are not to follow anyone then we must be prepared to construct our personal pedagogy, reinvent it through critically reflective practice, and develop a coherent rationale for its implementation. This seems like a daunting task, but it really is what teaching as opposed to telling entails. Teaching builds relationships, trust, and respect to promote a dialogue between teachers and students who hold a range of different knowledge, perspectives, and understandings. Freire understood that the dynamics of classroom interaction inevitably change in every context. He maintained

> If you do not engage in that adventure, it is impossible to be creative. Any educational practice based on standardization, on which is laid down in advance, on routine in which everything is predetermined, is bureaucratic and thus anti-democratic. (1998b, p. 228)

In the next section of this chapter, we discuss Freire's use of metaphors to contextualize and share aspects of his life that influenced his philosophy of education. These images captured our attention because they reflect important elements of his lived experience and we relate to them by creating our own vivid mental images. Many people ascribe to metaphors as representations of a lost love, a long-gone youth, or experiences with tyranny—they provoke our imagination. Whatever the case, metaphors create valuable images beyond the limitations of mere words and Freire was clearly a literary genius at invoking such images in his reader.

Metaphor and Meaning

Freire often used metaphors in writing to create meaning and emphasize experience. For example, he described himself thus:

> Born into a middle-class family that suffered the impact of the economic crisis of 1929, we became "connective kids." We participated in the word of those who ate well, even though we had little to eat ourselves, and in the world of kids from very poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of town. (Freire, 1996, p. 21)

One example of metaphor in Freire's writing is the family piano. His family owned a piano and he discussed it in terms of its socioeconomic and cultural value rather than exclusively as a musical instrument. The piano as literary metaphor created a vivid description of his family's social position while Freire was still a youth. For Freire, the piano was far more than a musical instrument, it was symbolic of Brazilian culture with its social stratification in general, and his family's social positioning at different times in his life.

Mr. Armada, a characterization of authoritarian Brazilian education, was a metaphor for the harsh teaching practices Freire endured as a student and reflective of an intolerant Brazilian culture in general. He was a metaphorical Dickens-like character, a Mr. Gradgrind, who represented the Brazilian indoctrinatory culture that merely posed as education.

Other people similarly use metaphors to describe education experiences that undermine student autonomy. For example, the British rock band Pink Floyd entered the education discussion with its recording *The Wall*:

> We don't need no education;
> We don't need no thought control;
> No dark sarcasm in the classroom;
> Teacher leave them kids alone.

The recording's title is a metaphor because it criticizes the industrialized world's modernist and rigid education system that shapes students into mindless automata. According to the song, the sole purpose of education is the social reproduction of prevailing attitudes and values. Many of us can easily relate to this mind-numbing educational *Wall* as we reflect on our own schooling experience. Perhaps we might recall sitting at our desks feeling alienated and dehumanized, as the education system demands our cultural conformity. Tyack's (1974) *The One Best System* offers an appropriate title and metaphor for modern education practice that naturalizes neoliberal values and society to teachers and students alike. Where is the option for students to pursue another path that provides some measure of existential choice and freedom?

Metaphors are important signs to consider in order to help readers better understand Freire's writings and views. Analyzing metaphors is a form of semiotics that helps unpack the meaning contained in experience and language:

> Semiotics is the study of codes and signs we humans adopt so as to help us derive meaning from our surroundings. Indeed, classrooms are diamond mines for semiotic study, for they abound in codes and signs and conventions that require keen observation and

> persistent analysis to be understood. Semiotics naturally resists the shallowness, the one dimensionality of the quantitative analysis of lived experience; instead, it searches for ways of seeing that describe the invisible empty spaces of the picture. (Kincheloe et al., 2000, p. 285)

Metaphors are so often used in human communication that we accept and even expect them without hesitation, although we probably do not pause nearly enough to explore their entire meaning in context. Freire's use of metaphors offers an important vehicle to understand his life and pedagogy, so we look closely in his writings for metaphors and explore their meaning in this section of the chapter.

Not long after Freire's death, Shor (1998) wrote *The Centrality of Beans: Remembering Paulo Freire* and shared with readers that Freire placed great value on eating. Freire maintained that eating food is biophilic or life giving. Food is a metaphor for Freire that sheds light on the changing conditions and circumstances of his life. He uses food as a metaphor in three important ways. First, food nourishes the human body and our reliance on food underscores our place as part of a larger biologic interdependent community whereby every living thing requires energy to sustain itself. No one can deny Maslow's most basic argument that humans need food and water for survival before they can engage intellectual and political challenges to achieve self-actualization. Second, food is political. Food is political when those in power or holding authority purposely create shortages, misappropriate resources, create unemployment, and limit access to capital necessary to purchase food. When people are denied food, they are simultaneously denied access to life, humanity, power, and hope. Third, food is a collaborative or community metaphor. In other words, people create, cook, and consume food together—food production is a community endeavor. Undoubtedly, many more ways exist to describe food as a metaphor. The important point is that words as metaphors can create meaning beyond their original intent through implied or specifically expressed direct reference meaning.

In *Letters to Christina*, Freire (1996) used metaphors to describe many of his life experiences. His reflective observations are significant and worthy of emphasis because they create mental images, like a photograph, that are worth a thousand words. These metaphoric images highlight important historical experiences that captured moments in history contributing to the development of his consciousness. To understand Freire, one must understand his metaphors.

Freire's gifted use of metaphors is important because it provides opportunities to examine closely and in greater depth the social, political, and historical influences on his pedagogy and worldview. For example, when humans think of food, each of us has vastly different views yet we have one shared natural reality. No one can survive without food so we are collectively aware of our basic physical need for food. But food is symbolically representative of more than survival.

Although most of us in the industrialized world have been hungry at some point in our lives, our hunger was largely temporary. We are hungry for many reasons—sometimes by choice—but we were probably never denied food in a life sustaining sense. We may know hunger as mild discomfort but very few of us know anything about starvation. Perhaps we had limited access to particular types of food

but we have access to some capital, family, or social organizations that make food accessible. However, for many other people around the globe food is entirely removed from their lives as a daily possibility, a lived reality that makes hunger and food vastly different experiences for millions of people.

One of us regularly uses food as a talking point to begin social science classroom discussions to reinforce the issue of social disparity and corporate oppression. Food is a thread woven throughout the tapestry of experience that no one can deny. These classroom experiences may begin quite innocuously with the concept of favorite foods and the cultural dimensions of food the topic of discussion. Since everyone can appreciate the significance of food to maintain human existence, it can be used as a means to illuminate the political, social, and cultural impact of food deprivation. Students begin to explore and explain their relationship with food and hunger, and consider the moral implications of denying entire populations access to a basic necessity of life. This simple teaching process opens the door to understanding student values and attitudes related to food and, most importantly, they have an opportunity to question their values and attitudes. If food is political, something traditionally taken for granted in our culture, then what else is political?

In Freire's pedagogic practice, he regularly used metaphors to create concrete examples. Students learned about political landscapes and how to recognize and create opportunities for social change through political action. Metaphors work quite simply: they connect learners with other experiences, generate discussion, and create shared meaning. Freire described himself as a "connective kid." But what does that imply? A connective kid refers to his family's relationship with upper and lower classes—a person living between two worlds. He called wealthy people, "those who ate well" and poor people "those who did not" (1996, p. 21). Freire's historical experience and metaphor of being a "connective kid" reveals a great deal about the economic conditions that shaped his awareness and cognitive sensitivity to surrounding events and people. As a child, he was fully aware of the economic disparities between two profoundly differentiated economic classes because he lived in both worlds. "People who ate well" were a constant reminder of his life with the benefits of economic status as well of his sudden poverty when his father lost his job.

For most of us, our own economic experiences until recently did not include such high and low points. Unfortunately, an increasing number of people across the globe including those in developed countries have been forced into new and harsh economic realities. Many more individuals are experiencing the "connective" experience to which Freire refers. For example, after Freire's father lost his job, his family's economic situation changed dramatically. Basic necessities required for everyday survival, once taken entirely for granted, soon became difficult to acquire. As a result of his father's unemployment, Freire experienced economic hardships at a relatively early age, so he recognized the family's downward trend in social status. Such family experiences affected the moral and social judgments he made throughout the remainder of his life.

Freire also recalled his father's political discussions with an uncle who was disgruntled over Brazilian politics: "I remember his constant comments about the disrespect for liberty, the abuse of power, the arrogance of rulers, the silencing of

the people, the disrespect for public property, and corruption, which he called 'out of control pillage'" (1996, p. 43). In many of his writings, Freire repeatedly recalled the economic inequities within Brazil and the palpable anguish of those who were physically and emotionally devastated by poverty and political corruption. So, he was also "connected" to a past that profoundly influenced his present.

Many of Freire's most poignant observations reflect his disdain for any society that permits hunger to exist alongside privileged individuals. The neoliberal attitudes that naturalized these disparate conditions became the focal point of Freire's writings and philosophy. Unfortunately, this same level of economic disparity and the poverty it creates continues unabated as we complete this book. The ongoing economic situation makes Freire's work exceptionally relevant and applicable in a contemporary context. In the current economic crisis unemployment, underemployment, and hunger are ravaging million of lives. Recent statistics indicate that 11 percent of Americans now go hungry on a regular basis, a number that continues to increase (CBC Radio, 2009).

In 1932 at the height of a world depression, the Freire family moved to Jaboatão, a small city 18 kilometers north of Recife. In *Letters to Christina*, Freire described himself as a "tree person" in Recife and a "river person" in Jaboatão. Interestingly, he saw himself as a tree person because he knew every fruit-bearing tree in his neighborhood from which he picked fruit to help his family survive. As a "river person," Freire fished and played with friends in the Duas Unas River, a waterway that provided both recreation and sustenance. He recalled,

> It was because of our proximity to the Duas Unas that my brothers and I changed, though not suddenly of course. Moving from a tree-shaded urban backyard to a new sociological context—that of a river-bank dweller—changed our whole psychology. (1996, p. 52)

Importantly, Freire was confronted with a moral conundrum during this period: steal and eat or do not steal and go hungry. He recalled eating a neighbor's "missing" chicken for Sunday dinner. His action raises the moral question of when so-called stealing may actually be morally justified. In light of the current recession, many people may "connect" with their world in similar ways. They too might think of themselves as connective kids or tree persons, caught between present and past, hunger and satiation, legal and criminal behavior. To be certain, Freire's personal experiences and observations suggest that poverty had a significant impact on his moral judgments, his character development, his compassion, and the development of his critical pedagogy.

In most instances, immediate family members, as with Freire, are our earliest teachers. He fondly wrote about his parents and discussed their vital and influential role in his life. Freire's father was a mid-level government administrator. Like many working-class Brazilians, he was subjected to continual wage cuts and hyperinflation due to Brazil's repeated economic downturns and government coups. Coups were led largely by ultranationalists and the military, both favoring and sustained by corporate interests and US influence on political leaders. Although his father died when Paulo was only 13, his mother and siblings remained a close family unit. Freire's mother played the traditional Latin American role of *marianismo*. Arrom

(1985) defines *marianismo* as "part of the Iberian tradition repackaged in the New World which gave women considerable influence over the family in a patriarchal society" (p. 259).

Following the death of her husband, Freire's mother served as the family matriarch and each of the older children supported her financially. In countries without social security networks, families are the main source of financial and emotional support. Therefore, large families are common and often necessary for security and survival. However, raising large families may also present economic difficulties for the working class when there is little or no work to be found. Large families are hard to feed, house, and clothe. Freire was the youngest of four children but the first to attend school and graduate from university. Neither Jaboatão nor Recife had a public education system and he therefore attended several privately owned and operated schools that needed state endorsements to accept students legally.

In school, Freire was immediately intrigued by the magic of language and composition. He was criticized in some circles for his early writing style, particularly the style in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Some critics have called it too difficult to understand or written exclusively for an intellectual audience (Schugurensky, 1998). In response to such criticism, Freire (1996) wrote, "My passion was always directing me toward the mysteries of language in a never anguished but always restless search of substantive beauty" (p. 79). Freire viewed himself as a student of language and was a voracious reader, a pursuit reflected in his broad knowledge of different schools of philosophy. His language use and prose allowed him, much like an accomplished poet, to create vivid images and generate emotional reactions from words.

Freire's use of metaphors was a deliberate act to create greater images that words alone cannot provide. Descriptive human language limited to adjectives is often inadequate to fully capture the nuances and paradoxes of human existence. Metaphors are not similarly limited. In Freire's household the family piano became a metaphor representing the class distinctions of Brazilian society. The piano was an icon to his father that symbolized their former social status in Brazil and the life he once again wished for his family.

Throughout much of Freire's childhood, his family was extremely poor and they lived precariously close to financial disaster. When his family was forced to steal food in order to survive, the material possessions remained a symbolic representation of class distinction for Freire's father. Freire made a specific reference to this emotional experience because his father, by clinging to symbolic possessions such as the piano, maintained hope for upward social mobility in Brazilian society. He reflected on the importance of social artifacts:

> By my eleventh birthday I had full knowledge of my family's precarious financial condition, but no means to help through a gainful job. Like my father, I could not just do away with my necktie, which was more than an expression of masculine style. It represented my class position, which did not allow me, for example, to have a job in the weekly market carrying packages or to do odd jobs in someone else's household. (1996, p. 19)

Freire, like many of us, was periodically caught in the clutches of capital consciousness.

Freire's father was an enigma. On the one hand, he clung to the piano in the face of economic despair to protect his social image. On the other, he was very unlike other Brazilians who held values that reflected capitalist conditioning. For example, Freire (1996) fondly recalled his childhood and the values and attitudes exhibited by his parents: "The democratic influences in my household, and my personal past, contradicted the authoritarianism that was the base of Brazilian society" (p. 96). Contrastingly, Freire (1996) described the harsh realities of Brazilian culture: "The Brazilian authoritarian tradition, the experience of slavery, the abuse of power that cut through the social classes, all explain Mr. Armada" (p. 57). Mr. Armada, again a metaphor for authoritarian education, was the owner of a private school who was known to beat and humiliate students in Freire's hometown.

Brazil's policy on education preferred tightly controlled and regulated content as a means of social reproduction and to protect national elitism. The government did not want an open discussion, or dialogue, of relevant and contemporary social issues. Torres (1994) argues, for example, that Latin American political leaders were aware of education's potential to highlight ideological contradictions. Freire maintained that Mr. Armada was a symbol of this Latin American authoritarianism, and he typified Brazil educators and the prevailing schooling culture of the period:

> Our struggle to understand what constituted true discipline, which is engendered through contradictory and creative relations between authority and freedom, was furthered by the results of research on these relations among parents of our students. We were shocked by how violent punishment was in Recife, in the rural areas, and in the hinterland. This was in contrast to the almost total absence of violent punishment in the beach areas of the state, as I discussed in *Pedagogy of Hope*. (Freire, 1996, p. 93)

Pino (1995) supports Freire's argument that violence was a systemic component of Brazilian culture. It was a mechanism of suppression and fear generated to control popular dissent. Violence is increasingly applied against public demonstrations in all capitalist countries. The Battle in Seattle and the Quebec City meeting of the G8 clearly revealed the militaristic extent contemporary governments are prepared to go to protect capitalist interests. Ten years ago, on November 30, 1999, tens of thousands of people from across the country and the world shut down the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle. Police responded by firing teargas and rubber bullets. In Quebec City the following situation unfolded 2 years later:

> When thirty-four heads of state gathered behind a chain-link barrier in Quebec City this past April to smile for the television cameras during the Summit of the Americas, it was the tear gassing outside that garnered all the media attention. Those on both sides of the fence jockeyed to put a spin on the meaning of the massive chemical haze that chocked the old city for over two days. The "insiders" claimed that as duly elected leaders of so-called free countries, they were attempting to democratically bring "freedom through free trade," and as such, those on the streets were merely troublemakers without a cause or constituency that needed to be dealt with accordingly. The "outsiders" asserted that those hiding behind the fence were the real source of violence—the tear gas exemplifying what nation-states are willing to do to protect capitalism and the dominant elites and thus, a certain level of militancy was necessary to tear down the "wall of shame" that many saw as separating the powerful from the powerless. (Milstein, 2001, n.p.)

Hundreds of peaceful protesters in both cities were senselessly beaten and arrested. In one of our own small communities, a schoolteacher's life was recently

threatened for his refusal to play the national anthem on a daily basis out of sensitivity to religious differences. The individual charged with threatening the teacher's life was given a suspended sentence.

Violence is sadly present within most education systems and not exclusive to any one country. Violence or the threat of violence—and not simply in the form of physical force—is a means of social control for the dominant class. Violence can be emotional, verbal, or physical. Since capitalism was a Brazilian reality, Freire argued that violence was an inevitable by-product of an ideological system that marginalizes individuals based on economic inequity. When ideology fails to contain resistance, force is used to quell opposition. Much of Freire's attack on traditional education practices was aimed at critiquing the physical and intellectual violence that denies students and learners their agency to act upon and transform their world.

Freire's accounts of his youthful educational experiences illuminate a concern with dictatorial teachers armed with absolutes. Fortunately, Brazil's contemporary public education system has become more accessible for many people yet, not unlike schools in other parts of the world, it remains largely authoritarian. The root cause of Brazilian authoritarianism and violence was the economic hopelessness spawned by capitalism's division of labor. The iron law of wages with the corresponding exploitation of labor is a universal characteristic of capitalism. The protection of this system that exacts injustice and poverty on others must be supported with ideology and violence, both often provided by schools, to survive. We return to this feature of capitalism in our forthcoming analysis of Freire's indebtedness to Marx in Chapter 4.

Freire argued that people per se are not responsible for the violence, but rather capitalist ideology and its requisite exploitation of labor are entirely at fault. We will argue in a manner similar to Freire that ideologies impact and influence human consciousness that leads to dehumanization, objectification, and protection of hegemonic interests through violence. For example, he believed that violence, both physical and intellectual, emerges from capitalist ideology. That is, capitalism requires brutality to protect the self-interest of the economic privileged class: "dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed" (Freire, 2000, p. 43). Without question, Freire's pedagogic attitudes and values emerged from his interpretation and historical analysis of class relations bound by the ideology of capitalism. He took the time to explore these relations and understand the immorality of capitalism—the metaphors we have discussed strengthened his ability to convey this message effectively.

New Brazil and Old Ideas

Freire often recalled the difficult economic hardship he and his family endured during his formative years. Brazil was controlled by military régimes and dictators who, in turn, took direction from a collection of influential and wealthy Brazilian

oligarchs. This latter group followed US economic and policy directives in exchange for military and intelligence support. The policies of these Brazilian governments were always staunchly pro-capitalist and, of course, vehemently antisocialist.

In comparison to the oppression of the far-right oligarchs, Brazil's current political leadership has been a welcome relief to many working-class Brazilians. In 2003, Brazil's social and political landscape changed significantly; Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva became Brazil's 35th president. His rise to power has altered Brazilian consciousness in many respects yet Lula's willingness to talk with socialists and socialist governments is a great concern to most US politicians and neoliberals. These groups reject outright alternative ideological views and perspectives. Of course, this same US reaction was witnessed in the country's treatment of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

Lula has changed the Brazilian landscape by modernizing its infrastructure and ratcheting up fair trade with other nations. Still, unrest boils close to the surface in much of Brazil because many people remain in poverty and without hope. The ascent to power of any politician is hardly grounds to stop criticizing elements of social or political arrangements. Like the rest of the world, Brazil is still a ticking social time bomb because of its dependence on neoliberal capitalism to create long-term social stability within an economic system known for perpetual boom and bust economic cycles. Lula clearly cares more about the poor than past Brazilian leaders, but still tries to solve the problems by working inside a structure that inevitably perpetuates class suffering. Sadly, such an approach for all its admirable intentions ultimately is an act of false generosity.

Our additional fear for emerging socialist nations in Latin America such as Venezuela is that political leaders from developed and industrialized countries will rely upon tried and true methods to protect capitalist interests. One thing is certain about people in powerful positions within a neoliberal ideological framework; they can be counted on to act in ways that protect the economic interests of the wealthy social class. The dominant class within Latin America has waged countless wars to promote and protect wealth and ambitions. Political leaders such as Cuba's Batista allied with business interests and cloaked their totalitarian ideologies and agendas in pseudo-democracy while most working-class people have been victims of ideological conflicts. The 20th century was a period in which many colonized people managed to rid themselves of imperialists only to have these same colonizers return in the form of multinational corporations.

Of course, multinational corporation profits and stockholder investments are adversely affected when colonizers are ousted and resources nationalized. For example, Mexico's Lazaro Cardenas nationalized the country's oil industry in 1938, a move that greatly concerned multinational corporation leaders and politicians. As the word spread about such events, oppressed people around the globe hoped to emancipate themselves from their colonizers. When Castro took control of Cuba in 1959, many corporate leaders became leery of investment in countries where the potential for social unrest existed. In one of Coppola's *Godfather* movies, the Corleone family's leader, Michael Corleone (played by Al Pacino), saw a pro-Fidel revolutionary blow up himself and a police officer with a hand grenade. At a

meeting of Mafia dons, Pacino's character asked, "What would lead someone to kill themselves for a cause?" It seemed clear to young Corleone that the revolutionary was willing to give his life for a cause. We suggest that this analogy plays itself out in reality and capitalists respond to colonized nations with a mixture of bribery, coercion, false generosity, and military action when these other measures fail. But values and perspectives are ultimately what generate change and it is values and new perspectives that we as critical pedagogues must bring to the classroom.

Democratic values and principles are worthy goals but we condemn the illusion of democracy used by politicians to further their colonizing, political, and financial ambitions. In a true democracy, political leaders should be representatives of the people and not pawns to corporate interests. The convoluted political systems of developed countries provide the perfect means to manipulate public opinion and protect ruling class interests. Although people live in a supposed democracy, they are simultaneously politically neutralized. In a thick democracy, politicians must be representatives of the people or be held accountable for their actions. Citizens must be offered genuine choices on important policy issues and political systems rather than facing a multiparty system with a monolithic point of view. Throughout history, business interests have financially subsidized political parties and oligarchs in exchange for political control at the expense of the working class. The latter has therefore been left without any political voice and, as a result, workers are very often blamed for the financial woes of a nation. Rather than develop a class consciousness, workers also find themselves pitted against one another in a struggle for meager employment opportunities:

> The industrial ethos has unfortunately produced an atmosphere that discourages one worker from helping another; indeed, in a workplace ruled by the competitive impulse one person's loss may well be another person's gain. In a good workplace workers acquire a self-discipline that attunes them to the need of others. Understanding that work is collaborative, workers overcome their egocentric tendencies and join other in a common cause. (Kincheloe et al., 2000, p. 177)

Neoliberal capitalism is especially successful at creating competition between workers by ensuring that the supply of quality employment opportunities is exceptionally limited.

Liberation Theology

Throughout Freire's life, Brazil was subjected to regular boom and bust economic cycles reflective of capitalism. These cycles, of course, are not isolated historic events. However, some of the economic downturns, including the present financial collapse, are more devastating and damaging to capitalism and workers than others.

During the 1920s, a world depression struck and affected people inside and outside of the industrialized world. Brazil's working class was especially hurt by the economic downturn. At that time, Brazil was not as heavily industrialized as it is today and the gross national income was primarily derived from exporting raw

goods and resources for consumption and manufacturing in industrialized countries. Brazil's industrialized trading partners bought raw goods, converted them into finished products, and added substantial value in the process.

The income produced by eventual industrialization and manufacturing generated additional wealth that created a middle class and new consumer markets. However, most of this wealth remained with investors and speculators rather than finding its way into the pockets of the working class. The laws of capitalism are immutable: speculators, the owners of the means of production, are rewarded for the labor of workers. During the economic downturn of the 1920s and 1930s, demand for raw goods declined. This decline led to job losses for the working class both in Brazil and around the globe. Freire was immediately affected by his father's job loss and family's subsequent economic plight, a situation mirrored in the lives of many working-class Brazilians.

Brazil lacked any formal nationalized or state-run social support system to help unemployed workers. Certainly, craft guilds and mutual aid societies existed but small-scale support networks such as these had extremely limited resources and aid was therefore minimal. Many Brazilians turned to the Catholic Church for assistance and hope. The Catholic Church exerted control over Brazil's national politics and policy for centuries. In 1494, a papal bull led to the Treaty of Tordesillas that created a line of demarcation granting Portugal control over most of modern-day Brazil. For this reason, Portuguese remains Brazil's official language.

From its inception, Brazil has remained the largest Catholic nation in the world. Brazil's relationship with Portugal brought with it many Iberian traditions and customs. Specifically, many Portuguese came to Brazil to enrich themselves and they did so at the expense of the indigenous population. Iberians brought Catholicism and capitalism, both of which were forced on indigenous cultures. Over time, however, many Catholic priests, sincere in their mission for Christ, were appalled by the stark contrast between Brazil's rich and poor. As a result, some priests began to promote liberation theology, a set of ideas contrary to official Catholic doctrine. According to Mayo (1999), "Freire is scathing in his critique of those particular forms of religion that deny people agency and the feeling that, collectively, they can make a difference. In Freire's view, traditional forms of religion serve to preserve the status quo" (p. 61). Liberation theology stepped outside of that formal religious tradition and Freire eagerly followed.

Freire was raised a Catholic and later embraced liberation theology as a means of helping Brazil's most destitute citizens escape the pangs of poverty. Liberation theology began largely in South America among the Jesuit order of Catholic priests. Since Latin America's colonization by Iberians, native South Americans were subjected to brutal tactics and continual physical and psychological violence to destroy their cultural heritage. Without question, indigenous cultures were forced to change in many ways as a matter of survival. No culture is impervious to external influence and modern development is the institutionalization of all cultures. Neoliberalism has destroyed virtually every value of difference in all non-Muslim nations. Later in this chapter, we discuss the neoliberal appropriation of all culture through literacy programs and false generosity.

Liberation theology was a powerful response to poverty through the political activism of Catholic priests representing a very influential and active church within Latin American culture. Unfortunately, the two most recent popes have been staunch critics of liberation theology and recently admonished priests who promoted and encouraged Catholics toward political activism. Freire and others were outside the church's immediate control and continued to promote political activism among the predominately Catholic population. Liberation theology ultimately became a central cog in Freire's machinery to work against the corporate domination and social injustice within Latin America.

The Brazilian political, cultural, and social landscape greatly influenced Freire's pedagogy. Although he found religion and its core philosophical elements plausible and acceptable, he never seemed to explain fully in response to Marx's ringing condemnation, the manipulative ideological power it holds over individuals and its frequently indoctrinatory methods. As a result, we find it difficult to fully embrace religion, even in the form of liberation theology.

Freire's biographical circumstances do shed important light on why he found religion a source of psychological comfort similar to many individuals, yet he failed to subject religion and its implications to the same critical analysis as other aspects of ideological influence. Freire's mother was a devout Catholic, a circumstance that led him to his earliest esoteric questions about life experiences. Obviously, liberation theology also held many views consistent with Freire's socialist objectives. Hence, his own history was easily combined with a movement that represented his core beliefs in social equality and political justice.

The importance of religion to Freire's ideas and life cannot be over stated. For example, Cooper (1995) maintains that

> Freire not only uses theological language, but also acknowledges the influence on his thinking of the Roman Catholic Church of his Latin American background. Christianity has played as important a part as Marxism in the development of his thinking, but it is a Christianity of a particular kind, a liberation theology which is critical of much established religion. (p. 67)

The moral idealism of Christianity as a metaphysical position was attractive to Freire, but it contained contradictions when considered historically in relation to the violence and authoritarianism of Brazilian society and neo-liberalism. Nevertheless, his strong affiliation with the Catholic Church naturally led to conversations about liberation theology as a radical religious ideology found almost exclusively within Latin America. According to Skidmore and Smith (1989):

> Theology and church organization have seen impressive innovations in Latin America. The highly controversial "theology of liberation" is largely a Latin American phenomenon—an attempt by Latin American theologians to reconcile their religious tradition with the political and economic pressures around them. (p. 395)

Throughout Freire's life, he maintained strong religious beliefs, but always criticized those who used religion as a tool of oppression. He once remarked that, "I never understood how to reconcile fellowship with Christ with the exploitation of other human beings, or to reconcile a love for Christ with racial, gender, and class

discrimination" (1996, p. 86). Torres (1994) maintains that Freire was more than a passive participant in liberation theology, but had a significant impact on shaping the development of the Brazilian movement.

Although we appreciate his attachment to Christ as a symbolic figure for representing values of love and social equality, Freire's alignment with any religion also reveals a certain historical amnesia about the traditional role of religion in worsening human oppression. We respectfully suggest a contradiction therefore exists between Freire's deep religious beliefs and his critical objectives that seek to debunk the forces of ideological indoctrination and their manipulative tendencies. Unfortunately, we find many similarities between the oppression often found in religion and that in capitalism but the primary similarity is ideological manipulation that commits violence against reason. The prime objective in Freire's philosophy of education was preventing precisely this type of violence.

To explain his introduction to Marxism and attempt to reconcile it with religious assumptions, Freire shared a rather surprising personal insight he experienced while visiting Australia:

> During the 1970s, in an interview in Australia, I told some greatly surprised reporters that it was the woods in Recife, refuge of slaves, and the ravines where the oppressed of Brazil live coupled with my love for Christ and hope that He is the light, that led me to Marx. The tragic reality of the ravines, woods, and marshes led me to Marx. My relationship with Marx never suggested that I abandon Christ. (1996, p. 87)

Yet, as any Marxist understands, a "hope" in Christ is primarily a posthumous hope and one that dangerously distracts individuals from provoking political change in their immediate lived circumstances. Such a hope for Marx was nothing more than a classic case of *false consciousness*. At best we might propose that Freire viewed Christ as a symbolic and philosophical figure, but even then there are contradictions between the apolitical nonresistance and passive love preached by the latter (such as turn the other cheek as Christ advocates to Matthew in the New Testament) and Freire's call for conscientização, or reflective and transformative political action.

In Freire's view, Brazil's tragic social and political reality was one of widespread poverty and oppression at the hands of people who regularly occupied church pews. In fairness to Freire, his personal religious convictions were expressed in terms of love for other people, not dogmatic or hypocritical religious beliefs, and yet the metaphysical posthumous implication of such beliefs cannot be dismissed when evaluating the coherence of his philosophy. Although his writings express his love and hope for the world, Freire's faith and religious views are in tension with his general contempt of ideological manipulation grounded in the capitalist superstructure and a desire for immediate political change in this life. However, in the tradition of French Jewish philosopher Weil's (1991) poetic commingling of politics and metaphysics, Freire found no such dichotomy in merging Marxism and Christianity. The insights of Christ as with the most important insights of Marx are the result of justified moral outrage with the objectification and dehumanization of the most vulnerable among us for narrow personal financial gain. For identifying that fundamental consistency, Freire deserves credit.

The Beginnings of Critical Pedagogy

Freire learned about engaging students and began to develop the idea of critical pedagogy as a means of social transformation by working in many different educational settings. He taught and learned from people throughout Latin America with varying interests, cultures, and expectations. As we mentioned previously, this diverse instructional arena convinced Freire there is no single method of instruction that is uniformly applicable across the education spectrum, an important point well worth reiterating:

> A progressive educator must not experience the task of teaching in mechanical fashion. He or she must not merely transfer the profile of the concept of the object to learners. If I teach Portuguese, I must teach the use of accents, subject-verb agreement, the syntax of verbs, noun case, the use of pronouns, the personal infinitive. However, as I teach the Portuguese language, I must not postpone dealing with issues of language that relate to social class. I must not avoid the issue of class syntax, grammar, semantics, and spelling. Hoping that the teaching of content, in and of itself, will generate tomorrow a radical intelligence of reality is to take a controlled position rather than a critical one. (Freire, 1997, p. 75)

There are no uniform cultures, no uniform students, no uniform interests, or uniform cognitive processes, no uniform teachers, and classrooms or contexts. There are, however, unifying or generative themes of oppression and injustice that are applicable to many situations. Freire spent much of his time writing and teaching at universities, dialoguing with people, or working in literacy programs. Rather than worrying about method, he was always committed to teaching as an ontological vocation rather than as a technical academic responsibility. Many contemporary teachers consumed with the search for "best practice" could learn an important lesson from Freire in this regard. His writings, perhaps more than anything else, continually remind us that teaching first and foremost is an act of love.

In 1941, Freire took a job at Osvaldo Cruz High School while he was still a university student and routinely helped other people as a tutor and mentor. It was during this period, in the infancy of his educational practice, that he developed his initial ideas about critical reflection on teaching experiences and critical pedagogy. In many respects, Brazil was his laboratory, an interesting and politically lively one that afforded him first-hand experience of the social disparity he fought his entire life to eliminate. Latin America and Brazil were prime examples of social and economic disparity.

Skidmore and Smith (1989) maintain that Brazil from the mid-1930s to late 1940s was politically dynamic: "a political opening, then a burst of activism on the left, climaxed by government repression" (p. 167). The political left was afforded, on occasion, opportunities to make social and political inroads, in part, because of the dynamic and contradictory forces that governed Brazil. Once the political left gained increased social influence it began to pose a threat to the nation's elite ruling class. Hence, the left with its socialist leanings was predictably quashed by the military.

Although many people have questioned Freire's politics, he answered the question about his views directly and succinctly: "While I am a radical and substantive

democrat, I am a socialist" (1996, p. 114). Freire's candid self-assessment is essential to understanding his pedagogy and the absurdity of suggestions that combining democracy with socialism is impossible. Indeed, socialism in many ways depends on democracy whereas neoliberalism relies on its subversion.

Pro-business government officials, both inside and outside Brazil, were concerned about socialism's growing influence with the working classes and intellectual communities. By exercising their political influence, Brazilian elites invoked considerable hardship on Freire and forced his self-exile from Brazil. Freire's socialism is probably most manifested in his pedagogy with its demand for social equality and economic justice, perhaps the most fundamental principles of the socialist ideal. For Freire (1997) these values must be combined with a desire for inclusiveness and a willingness to continually evolve:

> An authentic progressive party must not become sectarian, for that would represent a move away from its normal radical position. Radicalness is tolerant; sectarianism is blind and anti-democratic. Unlike the sectarian, always tied to their truth, the radical are always open to revising themselves; they are always ready to discuss their positions. The radical are not *intransigent*, even though they can never condone unethical behavior. (p. 83)

In the course of this century, socialism has suffered catastrophic failures when practical applications of its principles are attempted. We cannot ignore these failures and still learn from them. Freire's warning about sectarianism and absolutism should be heeded along with his warnings about the oppressed internalizing the values of the oppressors. Until socialists understand their politics in this fashion, the alternative they propose provides no more social justice than neoliberal capitalism.

Business as a Supranational Entity

As capital coalesced in the 20th century around the idea of global colonization, business became a uniform organized force in homogenizing political and corporate leaders. Numerous multinational corporations grew in relation to manufacturing technologies, lower cartage costs, and technological advances. With increased wealth came increased political influence. Banking institutions, many of which are presently collapsing, were created to deal with business concerns that transcended national boundaries. These collective measures and events allowed capital to create vast and relatively secure markets around the globe.

One primary requirement of multinational corporations is cheap and readily available labor. In all business ventures, profits are determined by controlling costs, primarily those associated with labor. From the capitalist perspective, labor is a resource as any other commodity and when one source becomes too expensive, a new supply is needed to reduce or maintain costs. Similar to raw goods and cartage costs, labor is both a commodity and a resource in the capitalist's view that must be controlled and extorted to maximize profits. However, unlike other resources, humans have a measure of agency that is often unpredictable in its consequences. With few exceptions, corporations seek stable and predictable resources

to maximize profits and actively suppress the rights of workers to secure this requirement. Capitalists require certain assurances for future investment such as national stability and political predictability that can be very expensive to control and often require the suppression of workers' rights.

To achieve resource stability, capitalists have actively sought political relationships with the leaders of host Latin American countries or influenced them with various enticements to ensure a supply of cheap labor, political cooperation, low-cost natural resources, tax abatements, and nonrestrictive environmental policies. Brazil in particular and Latin America in general have been highly prized markets and resource providers for precisely these reasons in spite of working-class objections. In Brazil, the foremost neoliberal objective has been generating profits for investors rather than improving the living standards for workers. In a capitalist context, the ruling elite always has capital to purchase manufactured goods but working-class people are often unable to afford the products they make. Underemployment and unemployment are neoliberal rationalizations, naturalized socially constructed situations that permit business to exploit cheap labor forced to compete against one another for available employment. This maintains social control, maximizes profits, and ensures a passive workforce "happy to have a job." The well-being of workers is always secondary to profits, regardless of the human cost. Freire was deeply troubled by this fact of capitalism and it shaped his views and opposition to neoliberalism.

In world economic downturns, most people are emotionally affected by salient examples of human suffering whether it's their own or that of others. Poverty has a substantial impact on human consciousness, especially in the areas of self-worth and undercutting any sense of personal political agency. Freire's pedagogy offered more than the mere transfer of knowledge such as occurred in banking education. It afforded dispossessed workers an appreciation for how their consciousness is affected by their material circumstances.

In this contemporary era of economic uncertainty, there is a prime opportunity to promote critical education as a means to enlighten people about needless social injustice as the result of neoliberal politics and policies. We have not arrived at this situation by any other force than that of our own decision making and the conditions can be changed by the same means. Similar to Freire, we understand there is no time to despair and instead hope that an enlightened citizenry will make informed and appropriate decisions about the world rather than acquiesce to the status quo.

Contemporary political discussions in the industrialized world, however, focus on returning economies to the principles of neoliberal capitalism rather than exploring other possibilities to negate the social poverty and boom-bust cycles inherent in neoliberalism. It is ironically painful that the very practices causing current economic suffering are those world governments seek to extend and support. Where are the discussions about viable alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and why are we not hearing these voices? There is much work to do and critical pedagogues at all levels of education must meet this contemporary challenge with courage and fortitude.

Throughout the world, multinational corporations have always found an ample supply of cheap labor. There is a distinct advantage in capitalism to ensure some

workers remain in financially desperate circumstances. Freire viewed this commodification of workers as fundamentally immoral and contrary to human ontology. In his view, life cannot be limited to simply producing widgets for mass consumption and creating incredible wealth for an elite few. Freire's view of life is far more philosophic: humans should not forego their ontological nature for the sake of neoliberalism. Education plays a critical role in both conveying this dehumanizing vision of life and freeing workers from its grips:

> The neo-liberal point of view reinforces a pseudoneutrality of the educational practice, reducing it to the transfer of informational content to the learners, who are not required to apprehend it in order to learn it. Such "neutrality" serves as the foundation for reducing the education of a plumber to training in the techniques and procedures involved in wrench mastering. Every educational practice goes beyond that – which avoids the reading of the word/reading of the world, reading of text/reading of context dichotomy – will not gain pedagogical endorsement and shall become mere ideology. Worse yet, it will be considered inappropriate for the present moment, one without social classes, without conflict, without dreams, without utopia. (Freire, 1997, p. 46)

In his harsh criticism of capitalism's dehumanizing characteristics, Freire developed clear distinctions between the oppressed (workers) and oppressors (owners of production). His oppressor and oppressed concepts became part of his critical pedagogy through his realization that human consciousness is controlled by dominant ideologies. However, Freire was not the first person to view capitalism in contradiction with human existence or as a form of oppression. As we point out later in the text, Marx's analyses of the bourgeoisie (oppressor) and the proletariat (oppressed) shaped Freire's views on capitalism's impact on human consciousness and experience.

Similar attitudes toward neoliberalism's impact on human consciousness were not new, exclusive, or original in Freire's developing pedagogy or in Latin America. Capitalists have sought favorable conditions from corporate-friendly governments around the world since the growth of the bourgeoisie in the 18th century. No one should be surprised by less-than-positive reactions from corporate interests to Freire's attempts to politicize education as anything but neutral and, in the process, encourage people to consider alternative social and political arrangements.

Just as multinational corporations take advantage of technologies and opportunities, many revolutionary writers and social activists take advantage of communication technologies and illuminate the oppressive conditions that neoliberalism and colonialism spread throughout the world. Gandhi's nonviolent civil disobedience would have gone unnoticed without such technologies spreading his message. Martin Luther King Jr's various speeches, including "I have a dream" would have been limited in scope. And, most recently, the Internet provided President Barack Obama with a means to circumvent the corporate control over fundraising by appealing instead directly to the general population.

Many colonized authors shared a common theme of restoring the rule of law, native cultural values, and the rights of humankind. Their prose encouraged the oppressed to have hope for the future and resist the values and demands of capitalist colonizers. For example, in *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon implored his

countrymen and women to reject Europe's harried developmental and modernist rationality: "Europe now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she has shaken off all guidance and all reason, as she is running headlong into the abyss; we would do well to avoid it with all possible speed" (1961, n.p.). Across the globe, hope was nurtured among the oppressed by recognizing liberatory opportunities and taking advantage of those opportunities through direct political action. For his part Freire believed that a critically literate working class was essential to construct a truly democratic society and free people from capitalist colonization. He encouraged all Latin Americans to chart an emacipatory course through political resistance rather than be steered by the powerful prevailing winds of multinational corporations.

Freire suggested that informed and critical people are able to recognize and create opportunities for social reform. Society requires a critical citizenry before true democracy can occur and the required criticality must be constant and encouraged. It was not enough simply to speak of socialism in the abstract:

> No leftist party can remain faithful to its democratic dream if it falls into the temptation of rallying cries, slogans, prescriptions, indoctrination, and the untouchable power of leadership. Such temptations inhibit the development of tolerance, in the absence of which democracy is not viable. No leftist party can remain faithful to its democratic dream if it falls into the temptation of seeing itself as possessing a truth outside from which there is no salvation, or if its leadership proclaims itself as the avante-garde edge of the working class. Any progressive party intent on preserving itself as such, must not lack the humility, of tolerance, of perseverance in the peaceful struggle, of vigor, of an ever-ready curiosity. It must not lack hope with which to restart the struggle when ever necessary. (Freire, 1997, p. 82)

Initially, of course, people must be capable of understanding the nature of their circumstances before acting politically to transform them. They need to recognize the ideological forces, often conveyed through functional literacy, that impact on human consciousness. Critical citizens in a democracy must be free to make decisions based on this structural understanding, including active and ongoing criticism of dominant hegemonic forces. Freire's views were obviously revolutionary and Brazil's powerful neoliberal interests were unwilling to permit thinking or education that would embolden the working classes. As a result, Freire was jailed for his teachings.

Political Leadership and Democracy

Freire's understanding and practice of leadership can be characterized as a significant departure from the traditional paternalistic approach. In his view, leadership was developed through dialogue and was only legitimate if everyone with a vested interest participated in democratic decision making. According to Freire, effective leadership continually instigates dialogue at every opportunity as a process to resolve issues of conflict.

Similarly, dialogic leadership in the classroom is essential to a critical pedagogue because education, like lived experience, is dynamic and synergistic. In a

dynamic milieu, leadership recognizes the potential of citizens and the roles they can play in the democratic process. This leadership style, or some versions of it, is applicable and appropriate for teachers interested in promoting and practicing critical pedagogy. Again, although Freire's approach is not a method in the regular sense of the term, it is a collection of ideas that can be implemented according to context and dialogue.

Freire was concerned that traditional leadership models reinforce social and political authority. Such leadership styles develop and embrace long-held assumptions that "leaders" make decisions and "followers" simply follow—the ideas of equality and dialogue central to Freire's pedagogic and social vision is lost within such leadership frameworks. Paternalistic leadership is a prime example of the banking education approach he argued so vehemently against. It situates some individuals as those holding knowledge and the remainder of the population as those needing that knowledge. Traditional leadership models in politics and in the classroom replicate the status quo at the expense of fostering humanization and transformative consciousness.

In many respects, traditional leadership alienates people below the leadership level from the decision-making process and eliminates the possibility of considering new ways to think about the social superstructure thereby reinforcing dominant class interests. Leadership models that separate subject and object extend into every aspect of human experience, a problem that concerned Freire because oppressed people find examples for behavior in the leadership class. In other words, by virtue of its position, the dominant class becomes the archetypical person that members of the underclass strive to emulate. This leads to an endless cycle of reproducing the very qualities and values that generate oppression in the first place, and causes even well-intended revolutions to ultimately fail in their mission. The idea of leadership is therefore a key political and ideological element in the reproduction of society.

To protect corporate and political interests, traditional leadership maintains power by controlling the police, the military, the various modes of production, and, of course, schools and education. US leaders have supported dictators around the world to protect domestic business interests. The Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and CIA operative Manuel Noriega of Panama had free rein to ravage their people and protect multinational corporate interests, all with active US military and intelligence support. When these "leaders" became a burden or liability to the same business interests, they were summarily deposed.

Many social critics became enemies of the state simply by encouraging people to become critically literate and politically active. Freire himself, as we pointed out, was jailed and exiled for activities that questioned the legitimacy and authority of Brazilian political leaders. Teachers, including university professors in the current corporate-dominated era, similarly risk "exile" from their profession if they criticize prevailing values or educational approaches. In many respects, the modern education system's leadership approach cannot withstand the burden of critical questions because it has no acceptable justification for its actions—a more effective method is simply to quell any critical response to neoliberalism.

Political leaders at all levels understand the ability of top-down education, as a system of social control, to develop monolithically minded people. A modernist education system that naturalizes prevailing norms creates a uniform consciousness that rewards goose-stepping students and teachers in a variety of fashions. These "leaders" find themselves taking positions of institutional power and authority such as principals, vice-principals, or presidents of student councils. The teachers and students rejecting social reproduction as the goal of education risk marginalization or worse (Giroux, 2003).

Literacy as False Generosity

Labor is simply a commodity in the present neoliberal capitalist paradigm. As a result, global capital requires varying levels of literate laborers that can fulfill particular task-oriented needs. From a human capital perspective that objectifies labor in this fashion, the primary function of education and literacy programs is skill and job acquisition (Armstrong & Dale, 2004). Literacy programs are largely geared toward developing job skill competencies that seem, at first glance, a means to help people become economically independent. Upon a more in-depth analysis, however, these literacy programs are created to stimulate the economy when participants become consumers, employees, and taxpayers. Unfortunately, most people who have only minimal literacy skills cannot generate adequate income and must choose between minimum wage jobs or public assistance. Furthermore, as economies slow during recessions, many highly educated people are forced to work in positions traditionally held by uneducated workers. In many respects, it becomes a buyer's market where credentials are simply a means to sort workers. Neoliberalism reduces humans to a natural resource subject to the whims of the marketplace, and the cheaper the cost of the available labor the better.

In order to be considered modern, workers must be literate in the dominant culture's language and concepts, and these concepts control the parameters of human thinking. Critics of technical-rational literacy programs (Mayo, 1999; Stuchul, Esteva, & Prakash, 2002) believe that traditional literacy programs hold pandemic implications for the working classes in third-world nations. They maintain that job-focused literacy proponents define literacy as helping the oppressed become functioning members in the dominant society to serve the corporate class.

As Lankshear (1993) observes, functional literacy portrays students as human capital being prepared for resource exploitation in the contemporary global marketplace:

> Functional literacy reduces persons to the status of mere objects and means, rather than confirming and exalting them as ends in themselves. It aims to equip illiterate [learners] with just those skills and knowledge – no more – which ensure competence to function at the lowest levels of mechanical performance, as workers and citizens in a print dominated society. (p. 91)

The failure to recognize literacy as a potentially indoctrinatory and politically disempowering force in education neglects the growing understanding that

literacy is a principal tool of ideological manipulation. For example, McLaren and Lankshear (1993) point out that,

> Educators have become increasingly aware that, far from being a sure means to attain an accurate and deep understanding of the world and one's place within it, the ability to read and write may expose individuals and entire social groups to forms of domination and control by which their interests are subverted. (p. 386)

Although Luce-Kapler (2004) avoids using the popular term "critical literacy" because it "has several meanings and each of those meanings carries a certain weight of history" (p. 159), she supports efforts to denaturalize prevailing discourse by making manifest the underlying assumptions it entails. She employs the term "critical awareness" to describe the analysis of text where narratives are "opened up, questioned, read closely, or even dismantled into lists of words" (p. 159). Another exercise Luce-Kapler proposes to reveal underlying textual assumptions is encouraging students to rewrite fairy tales from a feminist perspective to deconstruct the fallacious but socially instantiated idea of males as the protectors and saviors of women. These types of strategies foster what Shor (1992) describes as "critical consciousness," a critical literacy objective that allows students to debunk the functionalist assumption that "rejects human agency, denying that people can transform their conditions" (p. 126). Torres (1994) defines literacy as "being able to clearly and correctly express one's own ideas in writing" (p. 5).

Critics argue, then, that standard literacy programs support a hegemonic discourse of capitalism that is not open to criticism of the dominant values and attitudes. From these perspectives, literacy programs are excellent examples of neoliberalism's false generosity. Politicians maintain that they have the best interests of workers in mind as they supply funds for these programs that actually promote the system causing poverty and illiteracy in the first place.

In the industrialized and developing world, limited literacy or illiteracy is a problem for neoliberalism when the owners of production cannot communicate instructions effectively to laborers or when laborers cannot follow or complete simple commands. If labor and capital cannot communicate, capital cannot control workers, direct production practices, or ensure the effective exploitation of cheap human capital. Rather than comprising an emancipating element in education, literacy programs have instead become a means of controlling workers and citizens under the guise of caring and generosity. Although it has evolved somewhat in recent years under the pressure of critical educators, early Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definitions of literacy viewed the ability as simply one to absorb and restate supplied information.

The US government censuses recognize one level of illiteracy, absolute illiteracy. Absolute illiteracy leads to a distorted view of literacy, not a clear understanding how literacy operates as both a controlling and emancipating force. For example, if a person can function in society in spite of being classified as illiterate, is he/she in fact an absolute illiterate? In our view, the answer is no because many people cannot express themselves clearly in writing, yet they are not illiterate; perhaps they

are functionally illiterate but they are certainly not absolutely illiterate, especially when they are within their own cultural context and can describe and critique their own experiences.

Giroux (1989) describes functional literacy as "a pedagogy of chauvinism dressed up in the lingo of the Great Books" (p. 3). His perspective generates new thinking about literacy in general but critical literacy in particular. Giroux's criticism of traditional forms of literacy education creates educational space for oppressed people to maintain and create knowledge based on their own language and culture. Absolute literacy that champions the "Great Books" approach explicitly implies that the conquering white culture is superior to the conquered. Giroux (1989) proposes asking three questions before proceeding with a Great Books program: First, how does the subservient culture benefit by becoming literate to the degree they can read their oppressors' literature and clearly express their ideas in the oppressors' words? Second, how does understanding and expressing values from the oppressors' Great Books improve the oppressed lives? Third, how arrogant must the oppressors be to assume that the oppressed do not have their own great narratives.

Reading the World

The term "literacy" implies many things to different people but, typically in a school environment, it suggests the ability to read words as they are written, follow instructions, and repeat responses deemed appropriate by the dominant culture. It does not necessarily imply that someone is critical of the words and the values or instructions they convey, or someone is necessarily cognitive of the words expressed or implied intention. Literacy as taught in school suggests that a student can, for all intents and purposes, understand the basic meaning of written words and follow basic instructions contained in those words. If the words are spoken or written in a language that is understandable, then that person is deemed literate but not necessarily critical. According to Freire (2000),

> In problem posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (p. 83)

Freire pointed out that literacy and critical literacy are not synonymous since the former indoctrinates while the latter investigates.

The idea of "illiteracy" implies a certain power relationship between different elements of society. In the US for example, slave owners forbade the education of slaves to prevent them from acquiring information and knowledge. Laws were created to forbid the education of slaves, but these laws did not stop them from learning to read and write. Although most slaves remained uneducated in the Great Books tradition, they were able to read the world and appreciate the injustices committed against them. As reasoning human beings, they did not require a formal education to question their social conditions; by virtue of simply recognizing their humanity, they simultaneously recognized their inhumane treatment. Slave owners succeeded in obscuring or hiding some information from African Americans, but the former

could not hide the moral signs that suggested slavery is an abomination. However, learning to read and write afforded political empowerment to the moral recognition of slavery's fundamental violation of human rights.

Plantation owners genuinely feared an educated slave community. If slaves became literate and gained access to newspapers and books, they could potentially hasten their liberation by gaining a political voice and thereby terminate the plantation "states' rights" mentality. The supporters of slavery believed that literate slaves would be a liability; critically literate slaves would be disastrous because they could more effectively communicate and work collectively against their oppressors.

Another example of literacy's potential to free conquered or victimized people from their oppressors occurred in the mid-1850s when the French invaded and colonized Southeast Asia. At the time, very few Vietnamese were literate in large part due to Confucianism, a way of life that focused on basic agrarian survival through reverence for family ties. Literate Vietnamese came largely from the grueling and highly competitive examination system. Illiterate Vietnamese tended to remain in subaltern roles. Education in the country was reserved for the best test takers and the most politically connected.

In spite of these limits on educational opportunities, most poor Asians recognized education as the only available vehicle out of poverty. France's invasion of Vietnam had untold consequences on Vietnamese culture and society, and no one could foretell the long-term political impact. Thanks to France's egalitarian education policy and a need for Francophile laborers and office workers, Vietnamese nationalists used newly learned French communication skills to collect information about their colonizers' activities and habits. In other words, many Vietnamese learned the language of their oppressors and used it critically to understand and eventually oust them. The colonizers, of course, wallowing in their arrogance did not bother to learn the language of the colonized. Ironically, France's sense of social and cultural superiority eventually led to their military downfall in Vietnam. The Vietnamese needed more than 100 years to oust the French and later the US from their country, but the critical education of a few illiterates provided the tools to expel their colonizers. So, we fully agree with Giroux that literacy in many contexts is limited rather than enhanced by the arrogance of Great Books' ethnocentrism in the absence of a counter discourse providing a voice to the colonized and oppressed.

Pedagogy of Critique

Freire's writings express a rejection of authoritarian public schools designed primarily to serve the capitalist mode of production: "My criticism of the traditional school, inspired by the influence of thinkers from the New School and my personal experience, led, little by little, to my criticism of the very system of capitalism" (1989, p. 89). The New School, with its emphasis on more abstract knowledge, its epistemological ways of thinking, significantly affected the development of Freire's critical pedagogy. The New School was first formed in 1919 as a program where adults could learn philosophic ideas from exiled European scholars, a group that

Freire obviously related to based on his own political difficulties. The school provided a safe haven for intellectuals who fled or were expelled from totalitarian regimes. Ironically, many of the New School's faculty resigned from university positions in response to proposed patriotic litmus tests at Columbia University in the US. The New School's curriculum focused on such notable figures as Aristotle, Marx, and Foucault, all of whom would influence Freire's developing ideas about teaching and learning. These figures afforded Freire and his students more than a canon of "Great Ideas," they became the very foundation for his philosophical reasoning about education.

Freire was first exposed to critical theory from the Frankfurt School during this same period and he was immediately enamored with its ability to offer structural insights into capitalist workings. For example, he wrote, "No reflection about education and democracy can exclude issues of power, economic equality, justice and its application, and ethics" (1996, p. 146). Marx is credited with developing a modern criticism of the social superstructure and the ideological components that support ruling elites' interests. One of our primary attractions to Freire that distinguishes him from vulgar Marxism was the former's belief in the centrality of human decision-making and human agency rather than dialectical materialism: Freire wrote that "Men and women are programmed and conditioned beings, but not determined ones" (1996, p. 112). Rather than relying on Marx's dialectical materialism as the historical force for social and economic change, Freire supported the existential perspective that humans enjoy the capacity to actively transcend their experiences and recreate their world from a critical and moral perspective.

Freire's approach to critical pedagogy must be described as transformative because he argues that people can be ideologically liberated by critically reflecting on the historical conditions of social organization, understanding their political circumstances in causal and contextual terms, and acting in various ways to transform these conditions from one of oppression to one of freedom and justice. Furthermore, Freire's critical pedagogy emphasizes reflection on past experiences but reflection alone is insufficient for social transformation without action or praxis. He is regularly associated with the concept of praxis. In its most basic definition, praxis is one's action in the world based on reason and reflection. As Marx stated in his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx cited in Tucker, 1978, p. 125).

Freire argued that deconstructing historical experiences to expose their causes and effects offers the potential for transformation; however, it does not guarantee social transformation. In order to understand their social condition, people must initially critically analyze ideological forces that impact human consciousness. The various overt and covert ideological messages that shape our consciousness must be identified and explored if we are truly critical and expect to transform the world. But the transformation of individual consciousness must be followed by concrete action in the world.

In 1947, Freire was employed at Social Service of Industry (SESI). SESI was an organization created to dispense so-called assistance to the needy, what would be more appropriately called *false generosity*. Freire (1985) recalls one critical

experience that shaped his loathing of neoliberalism and his recognition that false generosity is an immoral practice:

> Even though I spoke very little about social class, it was at SESI, because of contradictions, that I began to learn that the classes exist in contradictory relationship. I learned they have conflicts of interest and are permeated by antagonistic ideologies. (p. 83)

During this period, Freire recognized a substantive need for changing widespread inequitable social arrangements throughout Brazil and the world caused by capitalism. He became increasingly aware of social classes, contradictions, and antagonistic ideologies that if left unquestioned would ensure the continued oppression of the working class in particular and all people in general.

When his father lost his job, it awakened Freire's understanding to the social and moral injustice consistent with capitalist ideology and the impact of such events on human consciousness. His experience with poverty and hunger left an indelible mark on his life and led to a life-long preoccupation with identifying the social injustices caused by capitalism through historical criticism. He was most concerned about the needless human suffering and exploitation that occurred at the hands of capitalists seeking to endlessly expand their wealth:

> My radical posture requires of me an absolute loyalty to all men and women. An economy that is incapable of developing programs according to human needs, and that coexists indifferently with the hunger of millions of people to whom everything is denied, does not deserve my respect as an educator. (Freire, 1997, p. 36)

Freire learned experientially that basic subsistence needs—food, health care, shelter, to name a few—are unattainable for many people within the context of capitalism's antagonisms. As a result of these experiences, Freire realized that the underclass in capitalist societies is denied basic needs that are readily available in an era of high mass production and extraordinary wealth. Instead, many poor and working-class people are routinely and immorally denied these needs purely as a consequence of unmitigated greed and social unfairness.

Freire also experienced dominant class "charity" and, from such observations, he developed his concept of *false generosity*. In order to understand false generosity, it is helpful to understand its opposite or *true generosity*. According to Freire (2000), "True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more become human hands which work and, working, transform the world" (p. 45). True generosity situates the victims of social injustice as agents with the capacity to direct their own existence by changing the circumstances creating the need for false generosity. The existential opportunity afforded by true generosity includes creating a world, unlike capitalism, where all people share equally in the fruits of society's labor and production. True generosity subverts capitalism by demanding that the conditions precipitating the need for false generosity are transformed to ensure social equality for all people without regard to sex, sexual preference, social class, ethnicity, race, or nation. Freire believed that if one person suffers needlessly for the sake of capitalism's profit, then all humanity suffers by the loss of its moral

foundation. To live in an immoral context and accept that context without resistance is an act of immorality.

False generosity, then, is the widespread capitalist practice of "helping" people survive within an ideological framework that merely reproduces the unjust conditions that led to their oppression in the first place. In turn, this assistance simply precipitates the need for further and perpetual assistance by maintaining the source of oppression. Social programs such as those accompanying the welfare state provide capitalists with defense mechanisms to limit social upheaval and unrest caused by economic disparity and the political disenfranchisement of the poor. Acts of false charity simply mediate capitalist guilt by offering handouts to the victims of neoliberalism from which capitalists benefit and the disenfranchised suffer. With the collapse of the welfare state, methods of control have become more ideological—in the form of corporate-owned media—and overtly violent when necessary in some of the ways described previously in this chapter.

During one of Brazil's more politically conservative periods, Freire had an encounter that demonstrated one capitalist apologist's willingness to protect neoliberal interests. Freire (1996) recalled the incident as follows:

> I was approached by a young industrialist who was a member of the SESI board of directors. He told me without mincing words that my politics were anti-management. He added that the correct politics, from the corporation's point of view, would be to reinforce free services while highlighting the charitable generosity of those in power. (p. 103)

Freire's account of this incident provides an example of how charity of this particular nature qualifies as false generosity. As Freire (2000) eloquently describes it,

> In order to have the continued opportunity to express their generosity the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this generosity, which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. (p. 44)

Freire recognized generosity of this type as merely an ideological response to the injustice inflicted by neoliberals to maintain the status quo.

After working at SESI, Freire joined the Movement for Popular Culture (MCP). MCP operated as a literacy program that created learning opportunities for children and adults. City politicians, union leaders, artists, and other intellectuals organized MCP. In Freire's (1996) view, it was a movement more than a program. The organization was devoted to social, political, and cultural changes. Such programs are an obvious consternation to neoliberal interests since they advocate fundamental structural transformation. Among other demands, Freire was adamant that the movement's participants required an explicit understanding or appreciation of culture's role in education. It was during this period that he began developing the notion that education should be "anti-mechanist" and "anti-determinist" (1996, p. 111). His educational response was in opposition to capitalism's powerful influences on human consciousness that moved individuals toward instrumental rationality and human capital preparation.

Freire understood very well that a mechanistic education and instrumental rationality are merely transactions of information, much of it sometimes useless or ideological, from one person to another that reduces knowledge and learning to

deposits of facts deemed important by a dominant culture. The emancipation of Brazil and other countries required a far different form of education:

> When I think about my homeland, I think, above all, about the possible dream, if not at all an easy one, of democratically inventing our society. Speaking of that, I must return to my criticism of the pragmatic neo-liberal position, according to which an effective educational practice today must be centered in technical training or in the deposit of content into the learners. In that case, the selection and organization of the content would be up to specialists. (Freire, 1997, p. 46)

Within such a system, knowledge is reduced to externally determined component parts for systematic delivery to learners. This knowledge is also constructed to protect and promote capitalist interests.

A mechanistic education, although obviously inconsistent with critical learning aimed at questioning prevailing patterns of thought and promoting social transformation, is the dominant form of instruction in public schools. We acknowledge the value of mechanistic education in particular instances such as training people to act in very specific ways that forgo the human inclination to question their experiences or social reality, but such practices should not be confused with education. For example, pilots are trained to follow specific rules and refer to operational manuals for information. They are not at liberty to question their "gut feelings." Freire's primary concern with mechanistic learning transferred into the realm of public education was that it discouraged any and all criticism of the curriculum or any analysis of the provided information. How could such a system qualify as education or democratic? How could such a system generate the necessary social changes to free Brazilians and others from the chains of capitalism?

Freire viewed a mechanistic education as a form of instrumental information transfer that protected hegemonic values and promoted social reproduction. A mechanistic education reproduces existing social and economic conditions by naturalizing social reality to students. As a result, the world is presented in an ahistorical context that nullifies the possibility of change by eliminating the possibility of structural critique. Freire recognized that a mechanistic approach to teaching leads students to merely repeat learned information as knowledge without reflection since epistemological authority and interpretation rests entirely in the instructor's hands. As such, once "truth" is acquired or accepted, questioning the world or the status quo is no longer necessary or a valued element of student learning. Freire also understood that when students stop questioning or critiquing prevailing values and attitudes, they are depoliticized and dehumanized. He learned firsthand that his educational objective was antithetical to industrialists and politicians because he encouraged students to question the dominant culture's legitimacy.

Based on this understanding of mechanistic education, Freire (1996) viewed society as transformable. In simple terms, he believed that life is what we make it and compelled students to accept their agency:

> In a dialectic, non-mechanistic conception of history, the future evolves from the transformation of the present as it occurs. Thus, the future takes on a problematic and undetermined character. The future is not what it needs to be, but whatever we make it in the present. (p. 111)

Freire recognized that all students come to the classroom with shared and disparate histories that inevitably influence their world views. By questioning student understanding of history, Freire engaged them in an interexperiential manner that respected their personal views, cultures, and epistemological perspectives. Freire argued that history and cultural knowledge play significant roles in constructing human consciousness but, and this is tremendously important, humans have the capacity to transcend their experiences, cultures, and world views. In other words, humans can, through human agency, act in ways that challenge the socially constructed reality that delimits their existential possibilities.

Freire used critical reflection in classrooms to create understanding between individual and group observations of historical and social reality. He often used critical reflections of social reality to illustrate history's "static state" naturalized by neoliberals and to underscore its dynamic potential. In Freire's view, history is largely static in response to political and social oppression; the working classes, or their counterparts, have been historically subjected to elite class oppression and violence.

In Freire's view, this historical pattern can be altered by education and political action which leads to a new social consciousness or what he termed conscientização: "Intervention in reality—historical awareness itself—thus represents a step forward from the emergence, and results from the conscientização of the situation" (2000, p. 109). Conscientização, or critical consciousness, occurs when people critically reflect on historical experiences and social reality.

Marx and Freire are similar in their observations that the history of humankind has been one of class struggles and antagonisms. However, such critical reflection on social and historical struggles is only a part of Freire's formula for provoking social change. Critical reflection without action cannot change prevailing social attitudes, values, and structures, and humans must act politically to change social reality. Further, these acts must be based on an enriched understanding of their circumstances grounded in a coherent humanizing objective of creating a more socially just world. Freire's success in implementing this theoretical approach to praxis came, in part, from his effective use of shared human experiences. Conscientização therefore includes praxis.

Throughout his life and even in death, Freire has influenced many influential educators around the world. He also developed close relationships with popular-class Brazilian politicians. These relationships actually allowed him to create many education programs that were aligned with his own vision of equal access to education. Although Freire had well-developed social, educational, and political objectives, his objectives relied on critically conscious humans that would act in ways to improve social reality by advocating justice for all people. His "method" was to open student minds to the ideological influence on human consciousness in order to expose the external influences on human consciousnesses and actions. In a pragmatic sense, Freire worked with the multitudes or working classes because he recognized the violent reality of poverty imposed on this majority by an elite minority.

Most of his programs were developed with the working class in mind and involved a close relationship with various union leaders. These political and

working-class connections naturally attracted the concerned attention of business leaders. Freire (1996) reminisced,

> The Cultural Extension Service (SEC) of what was then called the University of Recife was born of a dream of President Dr. João Alfredo Gonçalves de Costa Lima's and mine. Long before he became president, when he was still vice-president, we talked about the possibility of breaking through the university's walls and extending its presence into nonacademic areas among such schooled populations as pre-college students and public school teachers; and extending it to potential clients in popular areas—for example, offering educational programs with union leaders or (why not?) facing challenges like literacy. (p. 131)

During this period however, Brazilian politics shifted increasingly to the far right of the political spectrum. Freire and other social activist educators were confronted with the 1964 *coup d'êtat* that ultimately led to his imprisonment and self-imposed exile from Brazil.

Exile and Revolution

Wolfe's (1940) novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, reminds us that we can never really go home again. Wolfe's notion of exile explores the view that the people we leave behind prefer to remain unnoticed or out of the limelight and want to hide their "sins" so they might go unnoticed or be protected by obscurity. Freire's exile exposed political and moral sins that placed Brazilian leaders in a problematic spotlight. Let us be perfectly clear, Freire was forced to leave his homeland. He certainly understood the lengths to which political and business leaders would go to silence political opponents or perceived social and political agitators. Freire (1996) wrote,

> When the reasons that push us from our context into another are ostensibly of a political nature, the correspondence between those who leave and those who stay behind runs the unquestionable risk of creating problems for both sides. One of these risks involves persecution, not only for those who are exiled and their families, but also for those who stay behind. (p. 6)

Without question, he realized his family was in potential danger and the extent to which his opposition would go to silence his voice.

The importance of social, political, historical, and cultural context cannot be overstated. Freire's pedagogy placed great significance on human context and experience as they relate to developing one's identity and a sense of social belonging. Ira Shor recalled a conversation with Freire after his return to Brazil. Freire felt alienated from his native land and from the people's language. He also reported that Brazil's political landscape had become unfamiliar terrain. Furthermore, Freire suggested that he began to lose the youthful exuberance for political activism and confrontation (Shor, 1998). Of course, by this time, Freire was no longer a young man.

Although the 1964 coup forced Freire to leave Brazil, he found humor in his predicament. He was held in jail for 70 days and actually laughed when indicted for possessing military contraband. In the voluminous reading that we have done about

Freire, at no time have we encountered any evidence suggesting he, unlike his capitalist adversaries, advocated violence. Moreover, McLaren (2000) credits Amilcar Cabral, a revolutionary leader from Guinea-Bissau, as the catalyst for Freire's nonviolent approach to social transformation. Although one suspects given his girth of reading he was also influenced by Thoreau and Gandhi. An advocate of profound social change, Freire repeatedly rejected the idea of violence as a political option. If a revolution is to be successful, Freire believed it must come from the people and not from violent "leadership" since the people will take their political cues from the leadership. One cannot utilize the tools of oppression to change the dialectic structure. Freire's entire life and pedagogy were geared toward eliminating violence at all levels and of all kinds. He never forgot that violence by those seeking change simply legitimizes oppression and creates a moral contradiction.

Freire could not go home, as Wolfe suggests, because he publicly exposed and humiliated Brazil's injustice brutality designed to protect capitalist interests. In order to nullify Brazil's violent character, he encouraged the creation of a democratic society by using education to develop historically conscious and critical students. His only weapons against neoliberalism's tyranny were reason, morality, and social justice. His detractors' weapons, on the other hand, were traditional weapons of violence and oppression that were furnished by ideologues from the capitalist world. Freire's "crime" was popularizing the view that his homeland and its leadership had glaring social and moral problems that remained unaddressed. Freire's incarceration and exile also exposed that many Brazilian leaders had ensconced themselves in world politics and were in reality playing subservient roles to dominant foreign interests, rather than the interests of the Brazilian people.

The US emerged from World War II with never-before experienced international political prestige and global influence. Its power developed in large part because of its growing economic and military might, and its enhanced willingness to use both to advance its interests. American imperial jingoism was at a new high. This newfound power forced America's southern neighbors into the fold as a source of cheap natural resources and labor. Latin America's political and economic situation was created in part by the US declaration of war on international communist expansion, but particularly on communist activity within its own hemisphere. The rumblings of socialist revolution in the Caribbean region led many American politicians to act against potential revolutionary forces through both economic and military means.

Ironically, the subversives attacked by US intelligence forces included such diverse groups as the working class, students, clergy, and university members seeking democratic changes within their countries consistent with US democratic principles. Unfortunately, the immediate course of action adopted by the CIA was suppression of potential revolutions and revolutionaries at any economic or military cost. US politicians wanted to maintain economic control over Latin America and Caribbean politicians disguised this control as a form of national defense. In many respects, Cuba became the poster child for US moral bankruptcy in the region, the employment of ideological machinery, and eventual military ineptness.

Cuban revolutionaries, led by peasant armies under the guidance of Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevera, were successful in ousting Fulgenco Batista and his band of corrupt politicians who benefited from the exploitation of the Cuban people. Under Batista Cuba became a place of cheap and sordid entertainment to wealthy Americans, and a source of cheap agricultural labor to US business interests. Cuba remained a perennial thorn in the side of American politicians and policy, but US political leaders and military advisors were largely successful in achieving strategic goals elsewhere in Latin America that favored business interests at the expense of democratic principles. As a result of US antidemocratic policies and behavior in Latin America, the door was opened for the former Soviet Union to gain a political ally and solid foothold in the Western Hemisphere.

Although Cuba was clearly a multilevel failure in US foreign policy, the US sought to chart its own economic and political course that dovetailed with capitalist interests. One way of ensuring political support in Latin America was to install or support puppet regimes sympathetic to American interests. The US enriched its Latin American supporters with promises of finance capital and military equipment. Capital was made available by the creation of international lending institutions such as the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and countless foundations. In order to maintain economic stability in the region, pro-American régimes could expect military, political, and economic support. Politicians hostile to US interests could expect to be removed from office. Socialist regimes, both radical and moderate, were considered serious impediments to American business interests and were treated as such.

The importance of protecting American political and economic hegemony in the region was amplified by Castro's successful revolution in Cuba. Skidmore and Smith (1989) suggest that Castro's revolution achieved three important things that caused American politicians distress and infused revolutionaries with great optimism. First, Castro took control of American business assets and nationalized them to ensure domestic control and fair distribution of national resources. Second, the Bay of Pigs invasion was a propaganda victory for revolutionaries and a US military fiasco. The vulnerability of the US military and the CIA was clearly exposed. Certainly, the US had the resources to fight clearly marked combatants, but the traditional military approach was inadequate for fighting civilian soldiers or suppressing the popular will toward political agency. Castro created widespread hope among revolutionaries and social progressives around the world. Third, the revolution in Cuba was dependent on Moscow's economic and military aid. As a result, American leaders, fearing an escalation of the cold war within the western hemisphere, sought to quell the socialist groundswell in Latin America in light of Castro's successes. Their so-called carrot and stick solution was capital infusion to Latin American leaders who supported American policies through programs such as the Alliance for Progress. These programs were specifically created to develop a pro-capital sentiment by cultural invasion and political cohesion of neoliberals. Programs such as the Peace Corps were also developed to demonstrate cultural superiority, advance colonialism, and the values of first-world technologies as human models for the "correct" way to think and behave.

Revolutionary opposition, on the other hand, faced brutal realities. With the support of various dictators in Latin America, multinational corporations were free to develop new markets, enjoy cheap labor, and increase profits. American politicians and business leader concern about social and political unrest throughout Latin America was not without reason. Skidmore and Smith (1989) offer some interesting observations about communists working for Latin American governments during the period:

> The Brazilian Communist Party, for example, won 10 percent of the vote in the presidential election of 1946. Later that year three members of the Chilean cabinet were communist, and there were communist members of the national congress in Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. The important point is stable markets because investors prefer stability and return on investment. (p. 350)

American political and business leaders chose an economic ideological path that accepted no social or political alternatives. In order to meet their corporate friendly economic objectives, the US needed an ideological plan. Thus, the Alliance for Progress was created and Brazil's leadership became a willing partner.

The Alliance for Progress impacted Freire in several ways but most importantly, he and his fellow participants learned that the violent actions of political leaders are often inadequate to quell the human spirit seeking social justice particularly after they have drunk from its fountain. As an example, Freire (1996) recalled a meeting where members of a literacy party were reunited after 30 years:

> We met with ten of the literacy educators and twelve of the former literacy learners. We talked and reminisced about memorable moments like, for example, the request that ten convicted recent literates receive amnesty, a request made by Marco Guerra, leader of the group and today secretary of education for Rio Grande do Norte. We discussed President Goulart's decision to concede after regular hearings. Marcos told the story about the first strike to take place in the city, in the construction business. Workers from neighboring towns had been brought in to weaken the local movement, most of who were participants in our program. There was a meeting held between the locals and those coming in. After some dialogue, it was agreed that those coming would go back and that the locals would continue in the struggle for their rights. (p. 141)

The important point in this account is that Freire and others realized ruling elites would continue in their struggle to dehumanize others and that critically literate people could understand their dehumanized condition and wage a political battle for social justice.

In 1961, the Kennedy administration created a two-pronged program to encourage market economic and democratic principles in Latin America. Twenty billion dollars over a 10-year period was earmarked for various economic and social projects and the program of extensive financing was well received by the international business community. A less well-known part of the program was its anticommunist initiative. This more clandestine part of the policy required Brazil to develop a sophisticated military that relied heavily on intelligence gathering, a policy ultimately leading to Freire's exile. The United States School of the Americas became the training ground for Latin American soldiers to eliminate insurgents:

> The only problem is that the "counterinsurgents" are students, peasants, church people, professors and virtually anyone who speaks out against brutal oppression, stands up for human rights, and supports democratic reforms. Ironically, U.S. taxpayers are spending huge sums of money to suppress those freedoms elsewhere that they enjoy here in the U.S. What is happening is that the very rich landowners in Central America direct the militaries to protect their wealth which is made on the backs of the peasants who work their fields for below subsistence wages. (Bourgeois, 1995)

In the early 1970s, during his exile from Brazil, Freire was living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, while on faculty at Harvard University. While there, he bought a book, *The Alliance that Lost Its Way*, by Jerome Levinson and Juan de On. Freire (1996) mentioned Levinson and de On's book in a letter to his niece. Levinson and de On claimed that Freire's work during the 1960s was viewed as subversive and destructive to traditional Brazilian values (Freire, 1996). In one respect, they were correct in their analysis of Freire's work. It was his obvious intention to use education as a means to liberate people from the dictates and oppression of the politically powerful.

Freire viewed "traditional" Brazilian values as oppressive because neoliberals supported and endorsed the iron law of wages that guaranteed the continued exploitation of workers as slave labor. Freire's objective remained altruistic and consistent. He wanted to liberate the Brazilian people from capitalism and its systematic oppression of working people. In order to achieve that objective, his pedagogy encouraged people to examine critically the social structures that spawned harsh economic disparity and to become active politically to transform society. Hence, he was guilty as charged by Levison and de On because transforming the traditional Brazilian values of social injustice and political corruption was at the heart of Freire's domestic education program.

In the early 1960s, two opportunities presented themselves to Freire that led to his exile from Brazil. In an era when funds were scarce, the Alliance for Progress made education programs available to many people. Freire was given an opportunity to oversee these education programs and he was not naïve about the source or intent of the funds. Additionally, the political pendulum had swung to the ideological left with the election of Brazil's president, João Goulart (1961–1964). Skidmore and Smith (1989) describe Goulart as "the epitome of populism and anathema to the conservative military" (p. 172). They also make another important observation (1989):

> The left of the political spectrum had become very crowded. A rising sense of confidence had gripped the radical nationalists, who included Catholic literacy teachers, labor union militants, Trotskyist student organizers, and artistic idealists, all spreading a revolutionary message through popular culture as well as "high" art form. By early 1964 the radical left had gained government blessing, sometimes even government financing and logistical support. (p. 173)

But the time came for a shift back to the right as American politicians encouraged the Brazilian elite to take matters into their own hands to protect neoliberal interests. On April 1, 1964, a *coup d'état* led to Freire's imprisonment and subsequent exile.

As a result of the coup, many Brazilians were unjustly jailed or exiled. Freire's education programs were simultaneously crushed. He was arrested, held for 10 weeks, moved from prison to prison, and finally forced to leave the country without his wife, Elza, and their five children. They joined him later in what would be a long and particularly difficult period of his life.

Summary

Freire's arrest and exile had a tremendous deepening effect on his emerging political and educational views. In fact, it hardened his resolve to share his message of political hope and freedom with more people in Latin America and around the world.

Clearly, Freire paid a tremendous price in hostile environments to develop and share his ideas on the perils of banking education and advance the alternative objective of conscientização. From his childhood years as a "tree person" and "connective kid" to his arrest and exile, Freire understood both the suffering from poverty and the political consequences of trying to transform the social structures that caused it. The fact that he was so relentless in his efforts, in spite of the hurdles he confronted, is the primary reason why his name remains front and center in our discussions of contemporary critical pedagogy. He was a person of great vision, great intellect, and, most especially, great courage.

In Chapter 3 we explore the ontological basis of Freire's pedagogy through his utilization of Aristotelian ideas about humanism and their relationship to reason, education, and conscientização.

Chapter 3
Pedagogy of Humanism

Introduction

We pointed out in previous chapters that Freire's philosophy of education and critical pedagogy are sometimes criticized for their absence of specific formulas and clear methodological examples. This criticism is justified to the extent that Freire did not formulate a reproducible method for applied technical instruction of the type that dominates traditional teacher education programs. His intention was the opposite. For example, he pursued humanization rather than dehumanization as a fundamental objective that requires the creation of an ecological learning environment rather than an outcome generated by technical pedagogical practices. As Freire employed the term, humanization is the desired relationship between students and teachers and ultimately between all persons; a relationship constructed on the basis of mutual trust and respect and the prevailing freedom to reason. When humanization is practised in the classroom, it would in his view be extended into the realm of social interaction. Freire's pedagogy, then, is less a method than it is a way of living in the world, or ontology

In the present chapter, we explore Freire's pedagogical ideas in more detail and consider how he fostered humanization as an educational and ontological objective. In many respects, our own intellectual and pedagogical practice—our philosophies of education if you will—are directly indebted to Freire, but we have recreated and recast some of his ideas to comport with our contextual instructional circumstances. We hope that Freire would celebrate our educational approaches since the very essence of his pedagogy encourages the personal freedom to reinvent the world and the classroom, rather than simply parrot other ideas and practices.

Freire's pedagogy is perhaps best understood as providing educators with a foundation or platform from which they can launch their own programs of emancipatory learning and humanization. Indeed, this pedagogical flexibility is why understanding the fundamental philosophical basis of his views is critically important for both teachers and students. Oppression occurs at many levels and how it is revealed to students may differ significantly depending on context. In this chapter, we begin that exploration by examining humanization and ontology as general education objectives since they are crucial components in Freire's pedagogical philosophy.

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Freire's Philosophical Roots

Freire's critical pedagogy combines multiple philosophic ideas. In many respects, these philosophical views seemingly work as a cohesive whole and yet, at the same time, there are some significant tensions between his various philosophical assumptions. One purpose behind this book is that philosophy receives minimal attention in teacher education and understanding the complexity of Freire's pedagogy requires explanation and exploration. If his ideas are to be effectively applied in the classroom then teachers require a grasp of the underlying philosophies supporting his perspectives.

Taylor (1993) argues that Freire's philosophical ideas are more important for progressive pedagogues than his criticism of teaching practices such as "banking education" or the development of "culture circles." Taylor also believes that Freire's philosophical assumptions can inform critical educators' pedagogy as they create their own educational approaches and rationales. Understanding philosophical concepts and assumptions and implementing these elements into teacher education is important because they provide a foundation on which all education programs might be based. Freire approached pedagogy with a philosophical rationale about human nature before he conceptualized and implemented any educational practice.

In Kincheloe's view (1993), most teachers grapple ineffectively with Freire's approach to teaching and learning because they have been conditioned to follow particular methods rather than consider broader sociological implications. In many respects and in their defense, traditional teachers are bound to predetermined curriculum to meet local, state, and national standards. Without question, such curriculum is closed to criticism at the classroom level since the objective is creating a like-minded citizenry. In the Canadian province of New Brunswick teachers can be dismissed for publicly speaking against Department of Education policies. Within such a context, teachers are obliged to follow particular teaching methods that allow a broad-brush application of facts for later retrieval.

The modernist education system diminishes individual teacher values by devaluing teaching. Freire (1998a) was adamant that "The struggle to bring dignity to the practice of teaching is as much a part of the activity of teaching as is the respect that the teacher should have for the identity of the student, for the student himself or herself, and his or her right to be" (p. 64). The educational experience is always the same, teacher to student, knower to the unknowing, powerful to the powerless, and depositor to depositee. Kincheloe et al. (2000) describe the ontological crisis that occurs in teachers when their work is reduced to technical information delivery:

> Colleges of education often emphasize the technique of teaching, focusing on the inculcation of the "best method" for delivering a body of predetermined facts and the familiarization of teachers with "proper format" for lessons plans, which enhances supervision efficiency and thus invites stricter accountability. Traditional teacher skills seem unnecessary in this situation, for all the conception and planning goes on far away from the school and the unique students it accommodates. Thus, teachers relinquish control of the teaching act, and teaching becomes disconnected, alienating work. (p. 227)

Not only does this approach to teaching undercut the importance of context in student learning, then, it reduces teaching to an assembly-line model work experience that deprofessionalizes teachers.

Humanization and democracy are foundational elements in Freire's pedagogy and are not simply reproducible technical concepts; they must be practiced in the classroom. Humanizing education requires creating a particular learning milieu that includes a broad-based respect for students, for their preexisting knowledge, and for their agency. Critical teachers understand that the teaching and learning environment affects outcomes, and that means and ends in education are intrinsically connected. Unfortunately, many teachers trained in the techno-rational approach rely on externally generated methods, uncritically accept prevailing attitudes and values, and therefore replicate the status quo by never questioning the ideological messages in educational curriculum.

Freire rejected the idea of a uniform method in education. His perspective places his ideas at odds with contemporary education experts who reduce teaching and learning to a series of so-called best practices, or technocratic approaches. Content knowledge is fundamentally important in education. Indeed, under no circumstance are we suggesting that students do not need to know certain things. In the rhetoric of cognitive skills, for example, critical thinking has been reduced to a vendible commodity. Critical thinking is an ambiguous concept with many definitions and applications but its depiction as a cognitive skill allows the concept to be sloganized and reduced to a mere human capital commodity. Kincheloe et al. (2000) describe how this threatens critical thinking as a truly "critical" capacity:

> Modernist psychological models of cognition fail to address the issue of critical empowerment; the ability to disengage oneself from the tacit assumptions of discursive practices and power relations in order to exert more conscious control over one's everyday life. The rational, accurate thinking that emerges from modernism's one truth epistemology produces both a congregation of timid rule followers and a mediocre level of education unrelated to any ethical effort to use our ability to reason constructively. (p. 247)

Although respecting student rationality is frequently defended in educational discourse, there is often little attention devoted to its various interpretations, and their respective pedagogical and political implications. Rationality most generally refers to the abstract employment of reason, but the application of reason may be either instrumental or foundational in its approach. Technical, or instrumental, rationality denotes a series of actions organized to achieve predetermined goals. In other words, if the predetermined objective is "x," technical rationality charts the various steps leading to the realization of "x." Within career education, for example, critical thinking conceived as technical rationality refers to means/end reasoning that pursues human capital and business objectives with the maximum possible efficiency. A critical thinking approach consistent with foundational rationality, on the other hand, is not restricted to enhancing practical efficiency within predetermined human capital education frameworks. Foundational rationality explores the entire social, economic, and political context of the vocational problem or issue under investigation. Unlike technical rationality, critical thinking that practices foundational rationality is not merely managerial expertise focused on achieving predetermined

objectives, but evaluates objectives in light of possible alternatives, and respects the moral imperatives of a democratic society (Hyslop-Margison & Armstrong, 2004).

Similar to critical thinking, many of Freire's ideas also have been reduced to slogans and technical approaches. He would probably quite correctly scoff at the notion that another person's pedagogy could be reconstructed or reconstituted in another time or another place. Freire and Macedo (1998) recall Freire's request of teachers choosing to pursue his objectives: "I don't want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your fellow American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas" (p. 6).

To correctly understand Freire's approach to critical pedagogy, his request to Macedo must be taken seriously. Freire's ideas are not a method even though they might imply particular classroom practices beyond the broad fundamental tenets of a progressive student-centered pedagogy. Indeed, Freire feared that his philosophy of education would be reduced to a collection of predetermined practices, the very approach he argued vehemently against. He distanced himself from such methods because they are static and objectifying, with outcomes antithetical to humanization. Traditional approaches to education imply that all learners and the contexts in which they live are uniform across the human spectrum. Uncritical approaches to teaching and learning deny individuality on the part of both teachers and students; therefore, such approaches thwart the fundamental requirements of humanization.

Rather than relying on particular or reproducible methodological practices, Freire's educational advice encouraged educators to create and recreate each new learning experience. His preference for dynamic and contextualized educational approaches offers broad avenues for teaching and learning not narrow recipes to achieve precise technical outcomes. The important point, in Freire's view, is to reinvent his ideas or create new models of instruction while respecting the ultimate goals of humanization and social transformation.

For example, love, one of the central ideas in his pedagogy, is not a method, it is not measurable in the psychometric sense, it is not static nor transferable; it is an affective disposition central to Freire as a person. It should be obvious to his readers that Freire (1998a) saw teaching as an act of love:

> My intention here is to demonstrate that the task of the teacher, who is also a learner, is both joyful and rigorous. It demands serious and scientific, physical, emotional, and affective preparation. It is a task that requires that those who commit themselves to teaching develop a certain love not only for others but also of the very process implied in teaching. (p. 3)

Similar to love, humanization is not a reproducible, quantifiable, or measurable concept since respect for the reasoning capacity of others cannot be assessed in a systematic way consistent with positivist protocols.

Although there are no precise technical methods emerging from Freire's pedagogy, its potential application is limited only by our creativity and imagination. For example, Hughes (1998) incorporated some of Freire's humanizing ideas into her women's studies courses. To meet her objectives, she created modified versions

of culture circles, critical consciousness development, and experiential learning. She used shared experiences and the concept of body shape to help women understand the cultural influences that impact student consciousness. Hughes created her own brand of critical pedagogy to expose social reality and the cultural effects reproduced in student consciousness by media representations of women's bodies intended to generate insecurity, false needs, and capitalist profit. As a critical educator, Hughes developed a humanistic rationale, then created a means to an end; she developed a pedagogic plan to illuminate cultural influences on body shape. She felt a need to explore a particular issue concerning women and to use the classroom as a humanizing platform to highlight how ideology distorts self-image.

Hughes pedagogy is not described in any of Freire's books, but emerged from her educational and philosophical contexts and concerns. In order for students to be humanized, the teacher too must be humanized which is neither measurable nor quantifiable. Yet many people looking for pedagogical recipes remain critical of Freire's lack of specific technical methods. As McLaren (2000) points out, "Few accounts are provided to help us understand how teachers are to move from critical thought to critical practice" (p. 164). We believe that Hughes provides a salient example of critical pedagogy and how this transformation can take place in an actual classroom context.

Freire offers some general ideas and imperatives such as the humanization we discussed above but educators and students must learn to adapt his ideas to meet their own contextual circumstances. As McLaren suggests, he does not provide a template for universal application. We understand the fears and concerns many educators have regarding Freire's approach to critical pedagogy. Teachers in training and in the field are conditioned (i.e., dehumanized) to utilize other people's ideas and to not trust their natural instincts about who they are as teachers and their own creative abilities. Such self-trust is crucial to build the intimate relationships between teachers and students central to humanization.

Resistance to Critical Pedagogy

Freire urged students to form critical independent observations by questioning prevailing values and attitudes of the social superstructure. This approach encourages intellectual engagement with concepts through critical reflection of history and social reality. Critical reflection creates a general disposition toward analyzing the world and underscores the role of human agency in charting its course. The critical analysis of ideas requires students to question the political and ideological implications of all knowledge. For example, they might ask who is helped and harmed by the knowledge they acquire.

Constantly questioning, or problematizing, the world leads students to be critical in the sophisticated sense of closely examining what Freire refers to as "reading the word and the world." In order to understand the social construction of reality, or learning to read the word and the world, teachers and students must

explore the relationship between the word and the world as a constructed entity. For example, when workers are advised that acquiring the employability skill of "adopting a positive attitude toward change" is conducive to their vocational well-being, they are actually being told to accept deleterious change passively. As a result, they are being asked to relinquish their ontological inclination to act upon the world. Rather than merely accepting change, critically minded workers might employ their agency to change the structure of the labor market to ensure some measure of secure and viable employment. However, it is obviously not conducive to corporate interests for workers to receive such a message. This type of critical analysis helps students contextualize social reality and the mechanisms of oppression and liberation that operate within it.

Contrary to the technical/rational assumptions adopted by empirical research in education, teaching and learning situations are inevitably unique. This self-evident observation about the specificity of classroom context and its pedagogical impact is a difficult sell within an educational milieu focused almost exclusively on the generic delivery of externally generated material. In most teaching and learning experiences, school administrators are provided with curricula that contain specific teaching and learning objectives and outcomes, all of which are deemed "measurable" by experts:

> The positivist view of the world exerts a dramatic impact on all of us, teachers in particular. If expert-produced scientific knowledge constitutes the only valuable information about education, then schooling should be organized so that experts and administrators simply tell teachers how to perform their jobs. In this situation experts do all the thinking, and teachers merely execute plans. Any thought about the purposes of education and the daily work of the classroom remain separate. (Kincheloe et al., 2000, p. 57)

Scientism, a legacy of modernism and positivism, is an infatuation with science as a problem-solving mechanism regardless of the domain or problem involved. Society, with its range of structural advantages and disadvantages that impact directly on educational achievement and attainment, remains generally overlooked as the primary unit of analysis. For Freire, of course, society, or "the world," is *the* unit of educational analysis. Normative questions regarding educational objectives are either taken for granted (i.e., work preparation) or dismissed as mere opinion.

Unfortunately, most contemporary schooling is not really education per se, but simply affords a vehicle for credentialization; that is, a system of institutionalized schooling where success is measured by documentation and often some form of generated product, as is the case in contemporary academics. If a student is able to afford the credential as a consumer, then education simply becomes an act of economic exchange between a seller and a buyer, rather than a relationship that involves intellectual interaction and dialogue between teachers and learners. However, even within a learning environment that views society as a static entity and students as mere consumers, there is ample opportunity for critical engagement by a creative and courageous pedagogue.

Freire and Humanism

Humanism is probably best described as a philosophy of human nature inspired by the particular qualities associated with human experience and, in the Aristotelian sense, a life guided primarily by reason. Humanism affords the basis for living a fulfilling and ethical life without relying on the metaphysical assumptions advanced by religion, although some humanists may seek metaphysical support for their position. Most humanists understand the world of experience and our place within it by employing reason, experience, and what they believe are generally shared human values rather than theistically supported contentions.

As a group, humanists see no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural, or life after death. Atheism is not a necessary condition of humanism as much as it represents a strong implication of the position, and human existential lived experience is considered an end in itself. Humanists contend that moral values and "living the good life" are properly founded on human empathy and on shared human qualities and aspirations based on reason. They believe we must live our lives on the basis that it is the only life we will experience and that, therefore, we must make the most of it for ourselves, each other, and our world in general.

Humanist philosophies have arisen separately in many different cultures over many thousands of years, Aristotle perhaps being the most important early influence. Whether or not they use the term humanism, hundreds of millions of people around the world agree with the humanist philosophy of seeking to live a happy and productive life based on reason and compassion in the absence of any formalized religion. Hence, although the movement may be grounded in ancient Greek philosophy, it remains an active and prevailing perspective in contemporary culture.

Humanism is a central component in Freire's pedagogy along with the many other philosophical influences in his work. Schugurensky (1998) identifies some of the eclectic philosophical influences cited by Freire:

> Freire's theoretical contribution is not new or original. To some extent, this claim has its validity. In the writings of Freire we find, for instance, elements of Socratic maieutics, philosophic existentialism, phenomenology, Hegelianism, Marxism, progressive education and liberation theology. Together with Marx and the Bible are Sartre and Husserl, Mounier and Buber, Fannon and Memmi, Mao and Guevara, Althusser and Fromm, Hegel and Unamuno, Kosik and Furter, Chardin and Martain, Marcuse and Cabral. Even though Freire was influenced by these authors, his merit was to combine their ideas into an original formulation. As Fausto Franco has pointed out, in reading Freire one may have the impression of listening to familiar sounds everywhere, but at the same time experiencing an overall harmony of the whole that is new. (p. 19)

It is the harmony of Freire's philosophical synthesis that resonates with us as we read his work and the impetus behind our desire to write this text. However, in providing an analysis of his work we respect the collective integrity of the combined elements since their pedagogical beauty is in the harmony rather than some potential dissonance. As the philosophical foundation for all of his views, humanism holds perhaps the primary key to understanding Freire.

Freire was deeply concerned about the state of human existence from neoliberalism that caused dehumanization and undermined social justice. McLaren (2000) observes,

> Not all pedagogies that claim to be critical are necessarily Freirean but rather need to be judged in relation to the contextual specificity of their philosophy, their praxis, and their ethos of critical responsiveness with respect to bringing about a more just and humane social order. (p. 162)

McLaren (2000) describes Freire's critical pedagogy as specifically and foremost humanist. Freire's rationale for writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was to illuminate and thereby mediate the social violence caused by neoliberalism not merely in its physical forms but in its intellectual forms as well.

McLaren (2000) also recognizes Freire as the primary architect of critical pedagogy: "Generally considered the inaugural protagonist [Freire] of what has come to be known throughout education and the humanities as critical pedagogy" (p. 141). Consistent with his humility, Freire was not thrilled with such esteemed praise. When he was acknowledged as a leader in the development of critical pedagogy, he referred to his role self-deprecatingly as a "pilgrim of the obvious" (McLaren, 2000). Humility is an essential part of Freire's critical pedagogy because with it he removed the focus from the messenger to the message. His humility reflected an awareness and trust of human cognitive abilities to surmount social interference and pursue a world founded on principles of social justice. He trusted critically aware people to act in humanistic ways once they became aware of their potential to liberate themselves and others from dehumanizing situations. Why would we choose dehumanization if humanization was a genuine possibility?

Freire and Aristotelian Humanism

Humanization is the single most important component to Freire's overall educational program and it is largely indebted to Aristotle's ontology and rational essentialism. Aristotle's philosophy, in every matter from biology to ethics to ontology, was concerned with identifying the respective telos, or final objective of particular entities. A telos, then, most simply defined, is the final purpose of any given entity. Aristotle also viewed the telos as a particular entity's *excellence* because it comprised its essence and, therefore, identified the unique quality for which it was primarily designed. For example, an ax is designed for chopping and a knife is designed for cutting and these purposes are both the respective objects' telos and excellence.

In the case of human beings, Aristotle argued that human excellence was reasoning because it is the primary distinguishing quality of being human. The telos of human action, then, is to reason and reason well, for it is through such reasoning, especially in the moral and political realms (*phronesis*), that *eudaimonia* or human happiness is most likely to be achieved. *Eudaimonia* is not happiness in the short-lived contemporary sense of some passing euphoria instilled by consumer

purchases or sensory fulfillment, but it is a happiness based on a reflective understanding of the world and one's special place within it. It is this view of human beings as reasoning animals that condemns "banking education" as actually an act of violence because it interferes with the human capacity to reason, prevents happiness, or *eudaimonia*, and therefore denies the possibility of humanization.

According to Freire, dehumanization is the most obvious and pressing problem as humans struggle to achieve some measure of reflective contentment with their lives through knowledge, understanding, and action. The first paragraph of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* sets the entire stage for Freire's (2000) ontological and humanization argument:

> While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern for humanization and leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility. Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person who has an uncompleted being conscious of their incompletion. But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very navigation. (p. 42)

In order to achieve his humanizing objectives, Freire's pedagogy encouraged students to create meaning in their lives by asking them to reflect on historical reality. As reasoning beings, humans must utilize this capacity to achieve their human purpose, identify a morally appropriate world that enables rather than obviates reason, and ultimately leads to happiness.

Of course, such a view stands in clear opposition to a contemporary culture that is dominated by consumerism and conspicuous consumption as the popular and deeply misguided means to achieve self-actualization. These behaviors, inculcated into consciousness by consumer ideology, estrange humans from their ontology and create false and insatiable needs. Freire (1998a) observes that,

> The freedom of commerce cannot be ethically higher than the freedom to be human. The freedom of commerce without limits is no more than a license to put profit above everything else. It becomes the privilege of the few, who in certain favorable conditions increase their own power at the expense of the greater part of humanity, even to the point of survival itself. (p. 116)

At the core of Freire's attempt to reclaim humanization is the recognition that workers within capitalism share a common bond or relationship forged through surplus labor exploitation. A surplus labor analysis of capitalism suggests that profits are accrued because workers are paid less than full value for the work they perform. The skimming of surplus value from labor by the capitalist is translated into a subsequent profit margin. If correct, the theory demonstrates that capitalism is by design both exploitative and dehumanizing.

The wide-scale exploitation of humans, then, or their dehumanization, is a necessary and unavoidable component of capitalist economies. Through reflective engagement of their capitalist context as understood in part through an Aristotelian and Marxist lens, Freire believed that people would increasingly recognize the

inherent injustices of capitalism and pursue structural transformation. We deal more comprehensively with the Marxist influence on Freire in Chapter 4, but clearly the latter's condemnation of capitalism was based on its inevitable exploitative elements.

By identifying and discussing the conditions of social inequity, Freire argued people can begin to understand the source of their suffering, identify political possibilities, and then begin to liberate themselves from the structural oppression that precipitates dehumanization. We wish to return briefly to McLaren's observation noted previously that Freire is not especially clear on how this transformation occurs. Perhaps this is true in an explicit sense, but Freire's faith in human reason seems the paramount transformative mechanism.

In order to understand their shared social situation, the oppressed must recognize neoliberalism as an exploitative force and its ideological influence on human consciousness and experience. In the modern world, human existence is, of course, intricately bound to the contemporary idea of an "economic self" that is primarily defined by conspicuous consumption as a measure of status and self-esteem. Capitalism's success depends upon humans accepting neoliberal ideology as the only "true," or workable, ideology by summarily dismissing any possible alternatives.

Since public school curriculum is built to appease capitalists, students learn from day one that the absolute requisites for "success" hinge on neoliberalism and its dubious values that include demanding student objectification as human capital. Modern education systems, especially the universities, are built on a corporate edifice of consumerism where the credential is what matters (for its economic transactional value) as opposed to the educational experience, and the personal and social transformation potentially provoked by the latter. As Kincheloe (1993) reminded us, "Like other aspects of the postmodern landscape, thinking has been commodified—its value measured only in terms of logical capital. The moral and ethical dimensions of thinking in this context have grown increasingly irrelevant" (p. 55).

In Freire's final and perhaps most compelling book, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Donaldo Macedo addresses the influence of capitalist ideology on contemporary culture in the foreword: "The insidious nature of ideology is its ability to make itself invisible" (Freire, 1998a, p. xiv). But the real power of ideology is not exclusively in its "invisibleness," although it may indeed act in this fashion as Macedo suggests, but rather in its power to manipulate humans in particular ways even when such actions are recognized as contrary to our personal interests. For example, neoliberal ideology compels humans to consume while knowing, at least at some level, that we are driving ourselves to the brink of financial ruin and the planet toward ecological disaster. Neoliberalism's continuance hinges on ideological manipulation to consume and on the education system to promote these and other related values. These forces are so powerful and pervasive that even conscious recognition of their negative outcomes appears inadequate to prevent this manipulation. Hence, ideological consciousness requires deepening beyond simple recognition by reaching into the very composition of our worldview.

Freire argued that capitalist ideology oppresses humans by subverting social and political alternatives. It typically achieves this outcome by naturalizing capitalist values and behaviors as ahistorical. *Naturalization* is a term used to describe the ideological strategy of making questionable values part of everyday, or common sense, thinking. Freire recognized that people readily adopt the dominant ideology for both survival purposes and to appear "normal" in interactions with others. The rejection of any dominant ideology might mean complete marginalization from the economic and social life of society.

Throughout his own life, Freire witnessed "a reified consumer identity" spawned by capitalist ideology. He also understood that capitalism is strengthened in schools and classrooms by the human capital and instrumental model of education that adopts neoliberal assumptions. Students become trapped in a monolithic vision of the possible. In this modernist educational context, people and ideas are compartmentalized, objectified, and conditioned to believe that social change is impossible, an ideological effect that represents a direct attack on humanization by undermining human reason and action, or what Freire described as conscientização. In Freire's view, and one that follows from a Marxist analysis of the interaction between the economic base and the ideological superstructure, the dominant class develops and supports this educational program to reproduce its advantages. This systematic interference with human reason and political action, and its resulting dehumanization, is for Freire the epitome of immoral human behavior and the most devastating consequence of capitalism and the public education system it spawned.

Freire was troubled that prevailing ideological influences distort human consciousness, prevent humanization, and generate compliant behavior. In her analysis of Freire, Allman (1999) correctly maintains that ideology is not just a way humans think about the world but it inevitably influences human actions. She suggests that ideology establishes acceptable boundaries for all classes by depicting the dominant ideology as the only acceptable reality while simultaneously devaluing or ridiculing social and economic alternatives.

Since the September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, the world has been ideologically divided into two distinct camps: those who support the so-called "war on terror" and everyone else. More generally, political dissent is portrayed as antithetical to state security and civil liberties are challenged without any popular resistance. Freire believed in the human potential to transcend this distorted consciousness and viewed critical pedagogy as the means for people to question these contradictions. As the primary architect of critical pedagogy, Freire identified structural alternatives to capitalism, but these ideas never represented a static system since revolutionary change requires perpetual vigilance and renewal. Generally then, he recognized that capitalist ideology is a mechanism that prevents critical engagement and therefore constitutes a direct affront to humanization defined by reasoning and acting beings. Metaphorically speaking, the most effective way to spread the greatest amount of paint is with a broad brush. Modern education is a broad brush and the paint is neoliberal ideology.

Banking Education as Dehumanization

There is little question Freire's concept of banking education is the most recognizable concept in his entire body of work. The term has been discussed and distorted by virtually everyone who has encountered the idea. Interestingly, we probably all have at least some direct experience with banking education and its consequences. All students have had a metaphorical Mr. Armada or Mr. Gradgrind as an instructor. Even teachers who consider themselves progressive are probably guilty of banking education during some of their classroom instruction.

According to Freire (2000), banking education is the direct opposite of critical pedagogy because the former approach constitutes a direct attack on our humanization by ignoring the role and capacity of the student/human subject to reason:

> [Banking education is] an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is a depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or catalogers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away due to the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from the inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. (p. 73)

Freire appreciated banking education is the prevailing teaching method in public schools and was concerned that it inhibits thinking, controls consciousness, reinforces consumer mentalities, uncritically conveys ideologies, and ultimately leads to the dehumanization of students. It is no wonder that banking education remains the primary educational practice sponsored by the hegemonic classes and is taught to student teachers and practised in their teacher education programs.

Banking education maintains its currency because, in a manner similar to a virus taking control of a healthy cell, it appropriates the reasoning capacity of students to self-replicate. It limits student reason to accepting the knowledge of others rather than constructing knowledge based on their own realities and experiences. It is a form of necrophilia. Kincheloe (1993) described banking education as follows: "A banking view of teaching and learning will develop, which positions the teacher as a banker storing and dispensing knowledge and students as customers taking out loans of facts for tests" (p. 11). Banking education teaches students, and future citizens, how not to think for themselves or question possibilities beyond those circumscribed by market economy principles. The instructional strategy habituates learners to be mere receptacles for inert facts selected by epistemic authority. It also serves its ideological purpose extraordinarily well by creating a passive and compliant mainstream population virtually nonresistant to neoliberal excesses and exploitation.

In opposition to banking education, Freire argued that critical pedagogy challenges prevailing social class values and attitudes. He never suggested it was inappropriate to help someone in need, quite to the contrary, but only that such

help was incomplete in the absence of an accompanying education highlighting the causes of injustice. By questioning all aspects of social and political history, people become exposed to alternative social possibilities, the very outcome banking education denies. With new possibilities in hand Freire believed students would make transformative social and political decisions and reconsider what values constitute the social good.

By fostering critical consciousness and providing social alternatives to the oppressor/oppressed dialectic of capitalism, students reinvent their historical roles by using their agency to act upon the world. Freire wanted students to use reason, to explore, and to evaluate their circumstances and those of others on both the micro and macro levels. In other words, he asked people to closely examine their experiences and pose questions about the social conditions that affect society. Freire (1997) also expressed a certain outrage at the naturalization of globalization and its impact on intellectuals who should know better:

> I reject the notion that nothing can be done about the consequences of economic globalization and refuse to bow my head gently because nothing can be done against the unavoidable. Accepting the inexorability of what takes place is an excellent contribution to the dominant forces in their unequal fight against the "condemned of the earth". One of the fundamental differences between me and such fatalistic intellectuals – sociologists, economists, philosophers, or educators, it does not matter – lies in my never accepting, yesterday or today, that educational practice should be restricted to a "reading of the word," a "reading of text," but rather it should also include a "reading of context," a "reading of the world." Above all, my difference lies in my critical, in-no-way-naïve optimism and in the hope that encourages me, and that does not exist for the fatalistic. (p. 43)

Freire argued that a democratic education system focuses on inquiry, discovery, dialogue, and the progressive transformation of society. Banking education is directly linked to capitalism's efficiency models, or convergent thinking approaches, that retard or prevent the divergent thinking necessary for social change. This dehumanizing relationship forms the frontline resistance within education to transformative learning and the development of a truly democratic society. According to Freire (2000), "Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it—oppressors and oppressed alike" (p. 58). Educators at any level who employ banking education are simultaneously committing acts of violence against their students and themselves.

Banking education is concrete in its objective; its purpose is the transfer of ideology, and supporting perspectives and information, from the hegemonic minority to the "powerless" majority. Humanization is a foreign concept in the classroom because most formal education is constructed on "factoid" transmission rather than the construction of knowledge. Certainly, teachers and students have substantial latitude in any classroom context and are free to reject or accept its concrete objectives but they must be willing to face unpleasant retribution.

In most formal educational contexts, there are multiple political and administrative hurdles for critical teachers and students to negotiate. Jennifer Gore (1993) refers to administrative and political obligations as "institutionalized pedagogy of

regulation" (p. 141). She notes that these regulations impose some limitations on the level at which higher education can be emancipatory. But Freire argues that critical pedagogy is not a counter-productive process of teaching and learning as envisioned by the managerial class in education. In fact, it is the banking model of education that limits and retards both teaching and learning by denying the ontological completion of students as social and political agents.

Freire (1996) maintained that within any teaching and learning context, there are opportunities for progressive educators to employ critical pedagogy as a means to undermine the effects of banking education:

> What progressive educators need to do is bring life itself into their classrooms. They need to critically read day-to-day life and analyze, with learners, the shocking facts and disjuncture of our democracy. They need to expose learners to examples of discrimination taken from daily experience (race, class, and gender discrimination), and examples of disrespect for public things, examples of violence, examples of arbitrariness. These examples should be analyzed to reveal their aggressive contradiction of what I have been calling men and women's orientation toward being more, which has been constituted as our nature throughout history. Also, they contradict the authenticity of democratic life. In fact, a democracy where discrimination and disrespect occurs without punishment still has a great deal to learn and to do in order to purify itself. Not that I believe it possible for there to be, some day, a democracy so perfect that such disrespect will not exist. (p. 155)

At its most fundamental level, Freire's critical pedagogy is simply about providing students with the opportunity to question the social construction of reality to enhance their understanding of both its constructed nature and their own ability to reconstruct society.

> In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the very first line reads, "While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern" (Freire, 2000, p. 42). Critical pedagogy contributes to humanization because it is intended to be liberatory in celebrating human reason and agency rather than reproductive by denying these qualities. Critical pedagogy is about freeing reason and banking education is about containing it. Existential weariness is "not a physical weariness, but a spiritual weariness, which left those caught in it emptied of courage, emptied of hope, and above all, seized with a fear of adventure and risk" (Freire, 1998a, p. 123).

Freire is not alone, of course, in his assessment of banking education's impact on and implications for human consciousness and political action. Tyack (1974) observes that "some saw the school as a critical means of transforming the pre-industrial culture—values and attitudes, work habits, time orientation, even recreations—of citizens in a modernizing society" (p. 29). Althusser (1973) goes even further in his analysis of public education by suggesting it was primarily designed as an ideological tool to protect hegemonic interests. As democratic suffrage expanded and political inclusion became more difficult to justify on purely economic grounds, another ideological means was required to protect the political and economic interests of the ruling class. Hence, with the introduction of public schools, the consciousness of citizens could be shaped in such a way to ensure

they supported a political and economic system that advanced hegemonic interests while completely undermining their own under the subterfuge of pluralistic liberal democracy.

Modern capitalist society is an unjust and inequitable arrangement between the owners of production and workers; a relationship that emerged at the onset of the Industrial Revolution with the growth in political power of the bourgeoisie. According to Tyack (1974), many people during the late 1800s viewed public education as "communistic and sterile" and "students were becoming like machines, still a majority supported the school systems, as they existed" (p. 80). The history of public education indeed conveys a story of control and dehumanization, although the term "communistic" seems conceptually inappropriate to fit the context. Indeed, the participation of students in this type of schooling is limited to encoding predetermined values and messages that prepare them to conform to the dictates of the ruling capitalist class.

The opposite teaching approach to banking education accepts that human experience and society are fluid or dynamic as opposed to static. The social world is an historical construction determined by humans for humans. When schools remain silent on constructed historical realities such as ethnic, sex, and class discrimination, they impart a false image to students that education and society historically promote equality. Silence is a type of erasure that pretends a problem such as social injustice does not exist. Kincheloe et al. (2000) describe the impact of the problem this way:

> American educators fail to confront reality when they remain silent about issues of socioeconomic class and education. When they ignore issues of class, these leaders miss the connection between the consequences of schooling and students' socioeconomic backgrounds. When the term class appears, conservatives respond that because America is officially egalitarian, class analysis has no place in public education. Then they accuse the analysts of stirring up trouble, of encouraging class conflict or even of being subversives. (p. 355)

Critical pedagogy negates the oppressive and static nature of a mechanistic and dehumanizing education that promotes social reproduction by ignoring the reality of classism. Freire, in an attempt to respect the humanization component of his pedagogy, proposed an education based on identifying problems relevant to students—typically caused by neoliberal capitalism—and rationally solving those problems by critical analysis.

In Freire's (2000) model of problem-posing education students construct personal understanding through successive stages of critical inquiry. Problem posing begins by exploring the present perspective of students, and gradually assisting them to become more informed and critical social participants. For example, students might begin by focusing on local employment losses. They could then expand their inquiry by considering the present global economic and labor market practices provoking such suffering.

A critical approach to education would utilize problem posing techniques because they elucidate the connections between self and society, and enhance student understanding of how structural forces influence individual vocational experience. When applied to career education, problem posing might focus on the unequal power relations between workers and corporations, the substance and

conditions of various collective bargaining agreements, social and labor market conditions, and the labor market treatment of underprivileged workers. Students could also investigate technology ownership, its general impact on employment, and question who profits or gets hurt by its development and implementation (Hyslop-Margison & Armstrong, 2004).

Rather than being an instrumental exercise in information transmission, education becomes about living within a dynamic world and not in a static brick and mortar edifice built to protect and insulate an elite few. Learning and reasoning are natural human activities and therefore comprise an essential element of humanization. The primary focus of education for Freire, then, is questioning social reality and the problems it causes as a first step to transform the world toward greater measures of humanization and social justice. If the transformation failed to meet their needs, critical learners would naturally reconsider and transform the world again—indeed, the cycle of critical examination and rebirth is continuous. Within this model, education becomes the means to investigate the world and precipitate social change when necessary to disrupt any increased level of corruption and oppression. This model of education differs dramatically from the prevailing instrumental approach where students are merely prepared for the supposedly "inevitable" and static neoliberal social reality they will inherit.

Freire believed that the essence of humanness originates from our cognitive capacity to shape human experience. For example, Allman (1999) suggests Freire's focus on humanization confronts the devastating and dehumanizing effects of neoliberalism: "One of Freire's primary concerns is how the ideology of the oppressors can continue to affect even those who have critical perception of reality" (p. 90). As educators, we witness this behavior on a daily basis, as student teachers become alienated from their work before they even begin work in the profession. Kincheloe et al. (2000) for example, observe that,

> Colleges of education often emphasize the technique of teaching, focusing on the inculcation of the "best" method for delivering a body of predetermined facts and the familiarization of teachers with the "proper format" for lesson plans, which enhances supervision efficiency and thus invites stricter accountability. Thus, teachers relinquish control of the teaching act, and teaching becomes disconnected, alienating work. (p. 227)

As student teachers are oppressed in their pedagogical relationships, they eventually become the oppressors of their students and the cycle of despair is repeated.

Teachers within higher education are increasingly dehumanized by dictates from the managerial and bureaucratic classes that control the university agenda to protect neoliberal interests. Again, even at this level where some measure of critical leadership might be expected, self-preservation leads many teacher educators to oppress their students. Concurrently, students act as oppressors as well by treating teachers as retailers selling a product and seeing themselves as consumers, eventually judging their instructors on course evaluations by how well they respect this model. It is a relationship worthy of Foucault's notorious panopticon where all potentially subversive groups to neoliberal authority monitor and report on each other in the

interest of protecting hegemonic interests. In many respects, all humans are confronted with implementing and accepting varying levels of dehumanization in order to protect their perceived unenlightened self-interest, the foundational principle of neoliberal capitalism.

Challenges to Humanism

In Freire's pedagogy, rational essentialism serves at least two related purposes. First, it mediates the violence of capitalism by appealing to reason and the moral compassion generated by reason's relationship to emotions such as empathy. Second, critical learning and understanding are essential elements for all reasoning humans and when these educational outcomes are undermined, dehumanization and violence become pedagogical realities. Freire's critical pedagogy does not merely mediate the ahistorical representation of social conditions but rather assists students to understand social reality as a dynamic consequence of human action through *praxis*. In this historical process of discovery, Freire believed that if humans reflect on their experience—the utilization of reason and reflective action, or praxis—they discover their ontology or humanness. But what does it mean to be human? Freire (1985), as we noted above, described the essence of humanness in Aristotelian terms: "Man, a reasoning animal, said Aristotle" (1998, p. 94). When Freire cited Aristotle, he advanced an essentialist argument about humans and one that guided his entire philosophy of education. It is a position that has generated a significant amount of philosophical controversy.

Essentialism is a theory that ascribes a "belief in true essence—that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing" (Fuss, 1989, p. 2). Essentialism maintains that all humans share essential elements or characteristics and the presence of these qualities determine the strength of our humanness. Central to Freire's argument—again one borrowed directly from Aristotle—humans share the essential quality of reason or contemplation. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1998) equates human essence with this contemplative function:

> And we state the function of man [sic] to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. (p. 13)

Freire utilized Aristotle's essentialist argument to challenge the fundamental injustice of banking education and the corresponding naturalization of social reality to learners. Philosophically speaking, humans theoretically share an essential quality that is contemplation, or reason, and this shared element creates a uniform possibility between humans as a single genus of animal. Freire's moral argument hinges, in part, on the assumption that if all humans share this quality, how can one rational person deny the humanization of another? To do harm to another is to harm

ourselves. How can a rational and contemplative person perpetuate violence against one's own kind by denying the opportunity for humanization to others? Freire's employment of essentialism attempts to counter the hypocrisy or contradictions found in dialectical human social relations.

There is no rational or indeed morally acceptable reason why any human should endure suffering in this period of high-mass production and a vast oversupply of available goods and services. Freire hypothesized that if all humans share an essential quality, that is, the ability to reason and transform their existential experience through *praxis*, then dehumanization, the denial of this opportunity, is an odious contradiction and an affront to human existence. When recognized such contradictions would be rejected by all rational individuals. From Freire's (2000) perspective, a liberated human recognizes, criticizes, and actualizes a revolutionary world that is no longer engaged in dehumanization but is instead engaged with the human ontological vocation: "Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality" (p. 42).

As we noted above essentialism has detractors and some of these arguments must be seriously considered for they raise important philosophical challenges to essentialist assumptions. For instance, feminist, racial, post-modern, and structuralist perspectives all challenge essentialist arguments. Some feminists suggest that Freire's essentialism supports rationalism at the expense of the emotional or affective element in human character. For example, why should the ability to reason be a more essential human characteristic than the ability to care for others, or care about one's community? But reason, in our view, cannot be legitimately detached from emotion and caring and these feminist critiques tend to bifurcate the two qualities. Indeed, caring about other human beings is a direct outcome of our ability to reason, just as caring affects our reasoning, and therefore emotion and reason work together to create the capacity to empathize with human suffering. Kincheloe (1993) argues that the modernist perspective has created a "psychology of nihilism that locks people into rigid categories that follow them throughout life. Again the 1950s science fiction movies image of the mad scientist reappears, as cognitive essentialism abstracts 'mind' from the historical development of knowledge and its social formation" (p. 126).

As we noted above, Freire's emphasis on reason has been sometimes viewed as phallocentric or patriarchal. One example among many where he provides ammunition for such charges is illustrated in the following quote: "For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, on behalf of the continuing humanization of men" (Freire, 2000, p. 92). In his example, "men" is a gender-laden concept but its intent is to describe all humans, not only males. He used the concept of "man," obviously inappropriately given the historic marginalization of women, to describe all people without regard for their sex.

The gender-specific style adopted by Freire was a common linguistic folly of the period during which most of his ideas and writings were formulated. This contextual understanding of Freire is not an attempt to excuse his omission, but simply to understand his work in its proper historical setting. When Freire employs rational

essentialism in his work, men and women are universalized. However, the absence of gender-neutral language does appear a contradiction for someone sensitive to the ideological workings that result in oppression.

Unfortunately, in perhaps the most serious criticism of the position, essentialism ineffectively grapples with differences in the quality or basis of abstract reason and therefore can be a beginning point for the development of a contradiction. For example, Freire failed to specify how women and men should prioritize needs and the needs of others beyond the parameters of what abstract reason dictates. He failed to offer specific examples of how we should deal with particular issues or problems such as those who remain unmoved by the arguments of reason for social justice. Freire did not advance a moral prescription such as Kantian deontology based on reason, but seemingly believed reason alone would lead learners and others down the appropriate ethical pathway. Such a view ignores the multitude of historical cases where reason, as Foucault (1991) convincingly argued, becomes a tool of oppression rather than emancipation.

Freire certainly encouraged criticism of his ideas; a practice that places the onus of dialectic squarely on all thinking humans. His response to criticism would simply be to embrace it as a direct consequence of human reason. In some sense, then, the critique of reason as an essential human quality employs the very quality it denies. First and foremost and in spite of criticisms to the contrary, Freire employed essentialism as an inclusive rather than exclusive concept. It makes humans potentially equal contributors and equally responsible for terminating the violence imposed on humans by other humans. His essentialism did not disregard the socially constructed implications of skin color, gender, or sexual orientation. In fact, he celebrated the uniqueness of gender by observing, "The liberation of the oppressed is a liberation of women and men, not things" (Freire, 2000, p. 66).

Jackson (1997) correctly points out that there are multiple feminisms that form a rich and eclectic milieu of ideas. Freire's work has been incorporated into the feminist debate in many ways (Hughes, 1998; Jackson; 1997). Hughes (1998) argues that most feminist discussions have been based on social relations between women and men. Elements of Freire's critical pedagogy are used to create additional areas of study rather than the traditional gender debate. Many contemporary women's studies are informed by critical analysis of women in society and explore women's experiences apart from and in relation to gender. Hughes (1998) also maintains that Freire's critical pedagogy comes closest to supporting the goals of feminist pedagogy. Freire's work has exposed education's political and ideological implications, the hegemony of prevailing power relations in education, and the political authority that denies others, including women, an epistemological voice. Freire (1985) also recognized the inequitable gender relations and the power of cultural norms: "They [women] have to celebrate the feminine characteristics of their language, which they were socialized to despise and view as weak and indecisive" (p. 186).

Freire saw women as generally oppressed humans who were responsible and capable of instigating a feminine revolution and a resolution to their oppression. He believed that true revolution comes from the grassroots' level and that social transformation cannot take place without the participation of the oppressed: "It means

merely that the leaders—in spite of their important, fundamental, and indispensable role—do not own the people and have no right to steer the people blindly towards their salvation" (Freire, 2000, p. 168). This statement implies that women must achieve their own critical revolutionary mass and formulate a liberation of their own choosing. Freire (1985) maintained that, "I am in total sympathy with women's fantastic struggle, even though I cannot fight their battle" (p. 186).

If women must be their own liberators then women must be different or, perhaps more accurately, have distinct ontological objectives from men. They cannot, as has too often occurred, simply appropriate the values of their male oppressors. But Freire's essentialism is based on the assumption that all humans share an essential quality and why Freire argued for a separate "battle" for women remains somewhat unclear. Some feminists also challenge essentialist accounts of human nature for supposing that individuals lack the existential freedom for self-determination to choose for themselves rather than having qualities such as rationality thrust upon them as primary.

Martha Nussbaum arguably advances the most compelling position supporting rational essentialism by proposing what she refers to as *internalist essentialism* inductively supported through observed behavioral patterns common to humankind. Internalist essentialism does not distinguish between male and female, Western and Eastern culture, or other such taxonomies, but instead seeks to identify characteristics shared by all humans regardless of gender, culture, or ideological assumptions. Entirely naturalistic in derivation, internalist essentialism avoids dependence on metaphysical or even ontological assumptions by identifying the shared features of human experience through empirically based methods. Although Nussbaum's (1992) internalist essentialism may not be identical to Freire's approach, it contains a number of features that support his account of a universal rational human nature:

> All human beings have sense perception, the ability to imagine, the ability to think, making distinctions and reaching out for understandings, and these abilities are regarded as of central importance. All human beings participate, or try to, in the planning and managing of their own lives, asking and answering questions about what is good and how one should live. Moreover, they wish to enact their thoughts in their lives – to be able to choose and evaluate and function accordingly. A being who altogether lacks this would not be likely to be regarded as fully human in any society. (p. 218)

Nussbaum, in a manner closely resembling Freire, identifies various rational qualities and actions based on these qualities as central components of human experience. Hence, the claim that humans are first and foremost rational beings is not necessarily a metaphysical claim; it is also a basic empirical one and Freire's position is therefore grounded in observation and induction, the methods of traditional science rather than speculative philosophy.

Ontology, Work, and the Human Vocation

Freire's definition of human ontology is based on the following quote: "To be human is to work, eat, speak, criticize, read, disagree, come and go; in short, the freedom to be" (1996, p. 146). Generally, the above definition rests on the phrase "the freedom

to be" but we also believe that "to work, eat, speak, criticize, read, disagree, come and go" are important components of ontology and each activity deserves some separate attention. Thus, we investigate Freire's view of human ontology by exploring some of these terms.

Throughout Freire's writings, he explored the concept of work largely from a neoliberal perspective as a dehumanizing process. The most obvious form of work is human activity to produce goods for money. Work often contributes to social status. Certainly a physician earns more respect than a janitor, yet neither exists easily without the other. In many instances, the socially constructed status of occupations devalues some forms of work and elevates one person over another person. In the neoliberal world, work is valuable only to the extent it generates capital. The amount of capital generated corresponds to the status afforded the work in question.

However, many neoliberal values are in direct conflict with the human ontology. Meaningful work, of course, is more than just a means of producing goods or generating capital, it is an essential element of human existence. Work is a means through which humans engage the world, connect with their intellectual physical selves, and it is about using our creativity and imagination. Neoliberalism has reduced work, however, to competition, marketing, and fragmented production where workers are removed from their creations, thereby creating a prevailing sense of occupational alienation.

Freire relied heavily on a Marxist critique of capitalist labor as alienating. Marx (cited in Tucker 1978) maintained, "It (work) estranges man's own body from him, as it does his external nature and his spiritual essence, his human being" (p. 77). Freire's (1997) condemnation of valuing some work more than others for purely capitalist reasons is expressed in the following quote:

> Men and women work, that is, they act and think. They work because they do much more than the horse that pulls the plow to serve man. They work because they are capable of foreseeing, programming, and finding objectives for work itself. In work, the human being uses his whole body. He uses his hands and his ability to think. The human body is a conscious body. For that reason, it is wrong to separate so-called manual labor from so-called intellectual work. The factory workers and the farm workers are intellectuals too. Only in societies in which using one's hands in practical activities is scorned are harvesting cocoa or printing newspapers considered inferior. (p. 83)

Freire adopted many of Marx's views on the relationship between capitalism and human alienation. He opposed work that turned humans against nature as something to be simply conquered, overcome, and/or exploited. He was similarly opposed to people starving for the sake of investor profits and to people being alienated from assembly-line type work that undermines human creativity and occupational agency.

An essentialist element of Freire's philosophical perspective argues that people are existentially driven to pursue their ontology by exploring their creative impulses. This drive is not really a choice since its denial, according to Freire, is an affront to what it means to be human. His definition of the "human vocation" assumes that humans are naturally inclined to transform and improve their world through work. Yet a considerable tension exists between the ideological limits set by the oppressors on praxis and the inherent human craving to be creative and transformative. For

example, Freire (2000) argued that, "Some [people] work to maintain the structures, others to change them" (p. 101). The social and political structures are maintained by the owners of production through a variety of means including education to protect class interests. Furthermore, people who become intellectually ensconced in the structural system of the oppressors support the prevailing superstructure as well. The owners of production control the boundaries of human thinking by forcing dominant ideological precepts into public discourse. These boundaries circumscribe consideration of possible alternatives regarding society and the economy. People who seek to change the current structures are a threat to the owners of production and to the structural status quo. As a result of their perceived threat they are often marginalized from full participation in the labor market, blackballed by a system of reference checks and workplace history.

When Freire (2000) described work in terms of capitalist production, he argues that it impedes human vocation: "Work that is not free ceases to be a fulfilling pursuit and becomes an effective means of dehumanization" (p. 145). Work should not be coercive, but an act of creative expression that brings happiness to humans. Each person should also share in the rewards of human accomplishments. Of course, such a view of work stands in direct contradiction to the neoliberal arrangement where the plethora of low-pay service, retail, and information jobs stifle workplace agency and create an army of deskilled labor, ideal for the dark and inhumane purposes of neoliberal capitalism.

The Ontological Joy of Eating

It is often surmised that when it comes to our relationship with food, there are two kinds of people: those who live to eat and those who eat to live. According to Ira Shor (1998), Freire belonged in the former category. He recalls dining with Freire in Amherst, Massachusetts: "To him [Freire], eating lots of food was biophilic, by which he meant life-loving. To eat was to love life" (p. 77). According to Shor, Freire viewed eating as more than central to human existence but a metaphor for wealth and poverty. As we pointed out in Chapter 2, Freire saw food as a political tool and its deprivation the result of political injustice. By contextualizing food as a shared human experience, he believed, "food was a means of critically examining the world" (1997, p. 44) because its control exposed class distinctions and the dichotomy in social relations.

At some point in all our lives, we have experienced hunger. Everyone can empathize with that uncomfortable sensation of a gnawing stomach. But the problem of hunger for many individuals is far greater than an empty and growling stomach. Every day, hunger is a devastating inescapable reality for millions of people around the world. Freire used concepts such as hunger and work to illustrate the interconnection and interdependence between people, and the social injustices of neoliberal capitalism. His approach encouraged people to ask questions about structural conditions that led to human suffering from hunger. For example, why does hunger exist so widely during an era of high mass production particularly in

developed or industrialized nations? There is no global shortage of food, only a shortage of justice and caring to ensure that food is widely available.

Freire considered hunger a symbol of social and economic power. He believed that critical analysis of concrete social and political conditions such as the food supply revealed in a very practical way the injustice between the classes. A rational person committed to social justice will ask critically reflective questions about why hunger exists in a global condition of food oversupply and identify ways to mediate hunger. Freire suggested that asking questions about hunger is the task of progressive educators because any individual with a conscience can empathize with the devastating impact of going without food. This is particularly true in the poor Brazilian neighborhoods where he lived, worked, and ate. Freire politicized food to encourage the poor to question their social and economic circumstances and highlight the injustice of their lives.

During his early life, Freire recognized the violence of capitalism's control over and manipulation of food resources. Throughout the world, corporate interests' control over food resources has led to miserable living conditions and untold human suffering for the sake of enhanced shareholder profit. Typically, this profit does not find its way into the farmers or fishers who actually produce the food, but rather into the corporate distributors who control its supply. Freire's Brazilian context led him to conclude that many people do not have the "power" to eat, nor can they choose when to eat, or what to eat. In *Pedagogy of the Heart*, for example, Freire compassionately recalls poor Brazilians eating human body tissue—amputated breast tissue to be precise—from hospital dumpsters in order to survive. He believed controlling food supplies for the sake of corporate profit and political power is another example of dehumanization. Freire observed that neoliberal values of profit applied to the food supply, perhaps the most fundamental requirement of human survival, leave many people in complete despair:

> It should not be necessary here to cite statistics to show how many Brazilians (and Latin-Americans in general) are living corpses, shadows of human beings, hopeless men, women, and children victimized by an endless invisible war. (Freire, 1997, p. 171)

In his view, the destitute are robbed of food by the owners of production. Within the context of capitalism, human existence at its most basic level of subsistence is perverted for the sake of greed. How can a society with a professed moral conscience permit a portion of its population to go hungry?

Freire's loathing of capitalism stemmed partly from his first-hand experiences of its impact on human life. As objectified creatures, humans relinquish their ontological possibilities as they mirror their oppressors' values. Hunger forces people to protect themselves and families in various ways that include, for example, the "stealing" that Freire himself committed. Individuals consistently deprived of food spend their lives separated from their ontological possibilities rather than seeking ways to emancipate themselves and others from suffering by transforming society. When persistent or extreme, hunger is an all-encompassing sensation that consumes every ounce of existing thought and energy.

The Ontological Need for Voice

Freire placed tremendous emphasis on dialogue as it relates to human relationships. He believed that adversarial social relations and reification of class distinctions prevent the open dialogue required to precipitate change in the social and political structures. The oppressed are not free to speak with their oppressors about social and historical reality because the oppressors refuse to share power, and the ability to use and subdue language is power.

Many individuals experience this denial of voice when a "superior" refuses to correspond or otherwise fails to acknowledge certain comments. When the dominant group does permit dialogue, it is often artificial, superficial, and patronizing, a token allowance of voice that actually prevents any serious consideration of the problems at hand. Freire (2000) understands that the dominant class defends their false generosity when the oppressed seek dialogic alternatives to historical capitalist reality. He understood that humanism is thwarted "even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human" (p. 54).

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, Freire first encountered what he named false generosity while working at SESI in Brazil. As program director, he had implemented a critical and problem-posing method for educating workers. SESI's corporate leadership self-interest was challenged by Freire's educational objectives. His critical pedagogy was condemned by SESI leadership as purely political and therefore of no practical value to neoliberal interests seeking minimally literate workers as a source of cheap labor. Freire asked students to consider the structural reasons for poverty and to entertain potential alternatives to mediate the dehumanization and social violence it provoked. Consistent with maintaining hegemonic control, corporate leaders were uninterested in providing Freire or his students with a voice on any important issues. He was told that the SESI's objective was to reinforce oppressor generosity toward the working classes by preparing and objectifying them as human capital rather than encouraging them to gain political voice. They effectively denied Freire and his students the right to speak.

The denial of voice is also a prevailing ideological tactic in developed countries. For example, in New Brunswick, Canada, the Irvings own all major communication systems and networks such as the newspapers. This is a family-owned corporate conglomerate that seeks supply side monopolies on everything from oil supplies to family portrait photography. The corresponding result of this control over communication is that opinion running contrary to Irving interests struggles to find any popular forum to voice its concerns. Meanwhile, Irving newspaper editorials slam and undermine political opposition, completely neglecting the facts involved. The power of the corporate press, then, silences alternative voices and the media structure becomes a critical part of the machinery in neoliberal ideology.

One essential quality we share is the capacity to create words that convey meaning. Another shared quality is the human ability to interpret meaning. Freire (2000) argues that, "As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: *the word*" (p. 87), and

he explains that "words have constitutive elements" (p. 88). A word's constitutive elements contain certain etymological origins that reflect a particular culture's use of a word or concept. Words and concepts also have the power to circumscribe the parameters of our thinking. Humans inherit language and use it to name and interpret their world. Words are never politically neutral but have the power to both limit and expand social reality through the concepts and values they supply.

Freire discussed his experience in African nations to illustrate the power that language can have on society. He was invited to Guinea Bissau after the indigenous people ousted the French colonizers because the new leaders wanted to develop a liberating and humanizing education system. The colonized schools reflected the customs and traditions of the invaders rather than those of the colonized population. In the colonial schools, indigenous languages were viewed as impediments to progress. The colonizers referred to traditional languages as dialects and something for "educated" people to shun (Freire, 1998a, p. 184). In this case, the French language became representative of modernization and progress while native languages were considered backward and antiquated. However, when the colonizers were ousted and progressives came to power, Freire recommended a reinstatement of traditional languages to restore the cultural values of the indigenous people by distancing them from the language of their colonizers.

As Freire's analysis of language suggests, words can be oppressive or liberating. For example, a capitalist culture values the language of production and consumption, and people are correspondingly evaluated by their production. People perceived as nonproductive are deemed unworthy and a drain on resources and productivity. Their lack of productivity, regardless of the cause, is always portrayed as their own fault rather than the result of the structure of opportunity. Blame is correspondingly diverted from the doorstep of neoliberal injustice to a problem of individual deficit.

Throughout Freire's professional life, he worked to eliminate such distortions by expanding the scope of dialogue among all groups. In his humanistic approach to education and life, there are no unworthy humans, simply "acts of oppression" that must be eliminated. In order to halt the dehumanization by capitalism, Freire believed that humans require the ability to recognize and critique the words and language that shape their consciousness. They must also develop an evolving vocabulary of emancipation and secure the necessary political space to speak about their insights. In other words, they require the right to critique the conditions of experience supported through discourse.

The Ontological Need for Social Critique

Many unemployed and poor people conceptualize their economic situation by dehumanizing and blaming themselves. They see their poverty as their own fault.

Unemployment and poverty impact everyone differently, but their cause is more typically structural than individual. Freire's problem-posing education exposed this

political and social reality to reveal tangible facts to students who can begin to consider structural remedies to alleviate unemployment and poverty.

Criticism, defined as an exploration of the relationship between social organization and individual consciousness, reveals that economic hardships are caused by social and political decisions made at levels beyond their immediate control. We say "immediate" because invoking political change is possible regardless of one's social class. Freire believed that students could transform inequitable social and political structures if they critically confront problems and understand their source. In order to identify structural problems, students must learn about the world by researching it within their context. This approach engages students with a new reality—one that is contextual and fluid, not historically static. This new political understanding invokes progressive social change and humanization. Freire was convinced that humans must understand the structural source of individual problems before society can be repaired.

A problem-posing education becomes a useful means of confronting social issues and moving toward humanization. However, students must have the necessary knowledge and understanding of social and political reality to critique their situations and fully grasp the influences and origin of their problems. For example, they must know how capitalism developed and evolved, and that alternatives to capitalism are available. They require knowledge of how these alternatives might work in emancipating ways, and how and why movements based on these alternatives have failed in the past.

In Freire's view, sharing or constructing this knowledge with students is the role of progressive educators committed to liberation. He recommended at least two different approaches to expose the structural causes of individual suffering. First, we must recognize that all individual problems have some structural source; second, humans must critically reflect on their historical situations to determine the cause of oppression and to eliminate that cause:

> People will be truly critical if they lived in platitude of the praxis, that is, if their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the causes of reality. (Freire, 2000, p. 131)

Through reflective and critical engagement with their historical contexts, then, people can identify social injustices that generate personal hardships and dehumanization. By identifying and discussing the actual causes of social inequity, Freire believed people could liberate themselves and ultimately create a just and equitable world. But he was also pragmatic and feared that some students, viewing such change as too radical, might disengage from criticism and accept historical situations as concrete or beyond their political influence. Indeed, overcoming the fear of change is a major hurdle for critical pedagogy since many students, and citizens more generally, reject change.

Due in part to their dehumanization, oppressed people are likely to lose hope and become fatalistic because of the magnitude of the problems they face. It becomes "easier" in this fatalistic sense to accept the values of the oppressors than it is to

challenge and overthrow them. Humans face structural forces, through ideology and other forms of oppression, that deny their ontological need to work, criticize, and change the world that leads to "a fear of freedom" (Freire, 1998a, p. 160). This fear of freedom inhibits the pursuit of our ontological vocation and replaces existential hope and possibility with a form of resignation. For example, Freire asserted that, "the dialogical man is critical and knows that although it is within the power of humans to create and transform, in a concrete situation of alienation individuals may be impaired in the use of that power" (Freire, 2000, p. 91).

Culture Circles as Social Transformation

As the architect of critical pedagogy, Freire was constantly looking for ways to encourage social transformation. His objective was grounded in the assumption that critically reflective students become critically reflective citizens, potentially improving contemporary circumstances and the world for generations to come. One possibility for developing a transformative experience, he believed, rested in developing a dialogical classroom or learning experiences inspired by culture circles. Culture circles imply a dialogical relationship between people based on critical observations about socially constructed reality.

In *Letters to Cristina*, Freire (1996) discussed his childhood experiences during the economic crisis of 1929. He pointed out that the need to understand the "geography" of his immediate circumstances far outweighed the need to understand international geography. Specifically, knowledge of local fruit trees was far more important to the young Freire and his classmates than knowledge of France's national capital. The fruit trees provided them with fruit to fill their empty stomachs. Indeed, we have applied Freire's suggestion in our university teaching situations by acknowledging and exploring the common experience of students: for example, the peculiar mix of late 20th century (hyper-individualistic, media-drenched) consumer capitalism and late 19th-century White Anglo-Saxon Protestant entitlement.

Our intent in these situations is not to narrowly interpret the broad spectrum of cultural differences that may or may not be present among our students. Instead, we seek to expose the origins of the cognitive and ideological mechanisms through which our students conveniently overlook those differences, readily embracing, instead, a monocultural, "one-truth" epistemology that erases difference under an assumption of neoliberal universality. Similar to Freire, we begin with the assumption that the one-truth epistemology is, in part, a product of a dialogically remiss education that undermines counter discourses. The one-truth epistemology can be challenged with dialogue, and such dialogue has the potential to facilitate democratic transformation, providing it is recursively dialogic.

Traditional public education tends to cultivate and maintain a one-truth epistemology through dialogically repressive educational practices. In the end, these practices tend to produce oppressed, cognitively passive "subjects" who approach life as having a single, predetermined destination (typically a consumer based and conspicuous consumption end), rather than human beings with the capacity to

approach life as a journey with many possible destinations. The entire exercise of so-called educational reform witnessed repeatedly over the past 100 years, then, is really nothing more than a chimera, introduced to assuage the longings of the masses for a superior opportunity to achieve the championed material ends of capitalism.

Upon entering most education programs, students are treated like identical "canvases" sorted by age or "size." Teachers "mark" each canvas in exactly the same way, emphasizing a fact-based, "paint-by-number" curriculum. Along the way, creativity, difference, and discovery are intentionally stifled. Dialogue, especially when it challenges the curriculum, is more often punished than rewarded. When teaching and learning are reduced to such passive, nondialogic, positivistic enterprises, the ontology of all involved parties suffers. The opportunity for students to paint the world as they see it is eliminated.

In an educational forum where memorized facts selected by others are considered to be evidence of intelligence, the capabilities that are necessary to engage fully in democratic processes are suppressed. The role of students is adjusting to external expectations because knowledge and power are things possessed by others. Thus, in spite of an abundance of rhetoric to the contrary, the operational goal of education is not the transformation of the individual, or even the creation of "good citizens" but a replication of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural status quo. Freire believed that a dialogic classroom begins the transformation of nondialogic "subjects" into critically conscious subjects in the process of becoming.

Dialogue is therefore an exclusively human capacity to transform, name, and rename the world. The renaming of the world assumes a dynamic state of human language, values, modes of existence and requires constant critique. Critical dialogue is a means of continual human transformation that assumes a constant state of becoming rather than reaching some specific destination. It is at this point where criticism becomes commingled with contemplation to produce action. The transformation of world "A" into world "B" is action. But action without continued criticism returns us to the original problem of inaction. Freire's use of critical dialogue demands that once world "A" has been transformed into world "B," the process of inquiry must be repeated. Thus, the act of criticism is a continual process with no particular final destination in mind other than the elevation of the human condition toward greater measures of social justice, equality, and humanization.

Freire's concept of banking education is an excellent example of a noncritical and dehumanizing situation that has a profound censoring effect on people. All students need to have a certain amount of information and experience to mediate the world. In fact, we maintain that critical thinking is contingent on knowledge about a subject. However, banking education is about arrogance and lifeless transmission of facts from some patriarchal source. It is arrogant when teachers treat students as if they suffer deficits when they cannot meet expected obligations within the context of informal or formal educational experiences. A noncritical classroom names the world for others without their input and expects them to learn these names. A noncritical education is about students losing their voice and teachers or others denying them an opportunity to dialogue about their ideas, their values, their hopes, and their lives.

While a noncritical education is indoctrinatory and robs students of the opportunity to dialogue about ideas and inhibits transformation, Freire's approach offers a humanizing egalitarian pedagogy where students and teachers become one and the same. They are investigators seeking ways to solve the practical problems they face and pursue the human vocation. The dialogic classroom becomes a place of reciprocal learning by co-investigators based on their cognitive capacity to develop critical consciousness. By problematizing their collective experiences, they employ the uniquely human capacity to be contemplative and have in-depth discussion to encourage reflection and eventual transformation.

The Ontological Need to Read the Word and the World

Freire identified multiple ways to define and apply the experience of reading. In particular, he used the term "reading the word and world" to highlight human potential for democratizing the world and restoring humanization by criticizing and changing political and social structures. In its simplest definition, reading means the act of learning to read words as we described previously in the case of functional literacy. However, reading combined with contextual critique creates an additional dimension to human understanding. Reading the word and world provides an indispensable disposition to question a constructed reality and subsequently promote a democratic world through praxis, a concept that Freire included under the umbrella of literacy instruction.

A vast difference exists between simply consuming an author's words and questioning the author's intention. A critical reader should minimally question whose interests are being served by a particular author's or speaker's words. For example, how are different social classes or ethnicities portrayed in the text? Whose political voice is heard and whose is omitted or marginalized? What values are championed and what values are punished? By critically evaluating words and ideas, a reader can identify the underlying narrative message. Reading critically, or reading the world, reveals power relations that may be unintentionally hidden or intentionally camouflaged as ideology. In Freire's view, reading and understanding words and the world is the first step in liberation and humanization; reading the word and the world is the "language of possibilities" (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 56).

Freire wanted people to read the world through critical analysis of their historical experiences. He suggested that reading the word and world uncovers the inhumane situations in which many humans are forced to live. Critically literate people are forced to confront dehumanization and discover democratic alternatives to transform the society. We reiterate that Freire was also concerned about the dehumanizing effects of neoliberalism on the upper class. By virtue of social position and support for neoliberal values, the upper classes not only dehumanize others but they dehumanize themselves as well. Freire believed that critical and rational people regardless of social class would transform oppressive and dehumanizing situations because, as human beings, they perceive the unlimited possibilities for progressive social change.

According to Miller (2000), "The last ten years have seen a major growth of interest in learning from experience, in terms of both theoretical explorations and the development of practice" (p. 72). In some contemporary education programs, experiential-based learning has become the primary method of instruction. Students come to the classroom with unique experiences and from myriad social, professional, and historical backgrounds they share their life stories. Freire's experiential learning model, not dissimilar to Dewey's (1916) democratic learning approach, focused on the historical lived experiences of students. He does not suggest that any student should be denied access to cultural capital but that the focus of critique should be on immediate lived experiences.

The distinctions between learning from experience and experiential learning are significant. Learning from experience is an everyday process found in everyone's daily existence. Learning something new every day is inescapable. The task of making a determination about what is learned and its actual value is by nature a normative decision and therefore more difficult to ascertain. According to Usher (1993), "experiential learning is a key element of a discourse which has this everyday process as its subject and which constructs it in a certain way, although it appears to be merely a term which describes the process" (p. 169). Within Usher's definition, experiential learning is an encounter with other people. It is questioning oneself and others through dialogue about the world in order to create knowledge from everyone's experiences. It is a dialectic experience between those sharing perspectives in the true and timeless Socratic tradition.

Miller (2000) argues that dialogue creates "new insights and forms of practice" which lead to "dialogue and debate between the inhabitants of different villages and that the integration of contrasting traditions and values will lead to a new, interconnected, global village or experiential learning" (p. 75). Miller's metaphorical "villages" represent people and their respective experiences. From this dialogical interaction all participants are confronted with new ideas and some not so new which encourage critical reflection on individual worldviews. By understanding the views of others we can adopt a more critical perspective on our own. It is important to note that critical dialogue does not have the same effect on everyone because students respond to any pedagogical approach in multifarious ways. But even basic exposure to other ideas and experiences can encourage critical reflection on our own views at some point. More specifically, Miller argues

> However, "experiential learning" is part of a more specialized discourse, referring to an activity with which professional experiential educators (many of whom may also define themselves as adult educators) are concerned. To describe oneself as an experiential educator may be to associate oneself with a particular set of pedagogic (or perhaps andragogic) practices or technologies; to own a set of values emphasizing autonomy and human freedom; or to suggest a preference for a particular style of learning. Sometimes it is about encouraging learners to think about some aspect of their life history in new ways; sometime it involves the creation of new experiences in a classroom or conference from which it is intended that participants should learn. (2000, p. 74)

Miller's most important point is that historical reflection helps students interpret historical events, particularly those that have shaped each person's life and the

society. Consequently, these events are viewed as acts of human agency and the naturalizing impact of ideology is limited.

The objective of experiential learning is antagonistic to the status quo because its objective is social and structural change. The purpose of experiential learning, or critical reading of the word and the world, is individual and social transformation. Freire argued that once students have been exposed to the historical narrative through research (i.e., researching problems that affect them), they begin the process of challenging their "concrete situations." Freire is not alone in his use of dialogue to create experiential learning opportunities. Brookfield (2000) elaborates

> The adult educator's task is that of helping people articulate their experience in dialogic circles and then encouraging them to review this through the multiple lenses provided by colleagues in the circle. On the basis of these collaborative critical reflections on experience adults re-enter the world to be taken critically informed actions that are then brought back to the circle for further critical analysis. (p. 38)

Brookfield's approach is similar to Freire's culture circles in that they encourage students to explore other experiences and worldviews. The assumption of a critical perspective can be very unsafe and there are pitfalls for students and teachers. If they challenge the dominant culture, students and teachers can encounter what Brookfield calls "cultural suicide."

Freire wanted to uncover underlying power relationships within the world and believed humans have the ethical right to ask questions of the prevailing structures in spite of this risk. His pedagogy was based on the human right to interpret experiences rather than having experiences interpreted for us. He believed first and foremost in the right to think critically and act in accordance with a critical analysis of one's experience. Freire argued that only the critical analysis of a problem combined with subsequent action afforded individuals the opportunity to fulfill their ontological vocation of conscientização.

Freire was very specific about the role of educators and the use of dialogue in the classroom. Critical pedagogues have the acumen to closely examine students' historical experiences by listening to their characterizations of reality. In doing so, the educator can help develop teaching and learning opportunities based on student experiences and interests, and raise questions related to the described context. According to Freire (2000), such opportunities would be accomplished by a "humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (p. 68). His analysis argues that a positivistic education based on facts provided by others has the power to dehumanize students by punishing intellectual exploration. As an example, many positivistic teachers impose their understanding of reality on students without considering student experiences. When Freire spoke of banking education, he was also speaking about the arrogance some teachers or politicians display by marginalizing students from the teaching and learning experience by ignoring their experiential contributions to dialogue.

Contemporary politics has placed curriculum policy on the doorstep of test makers. As a result, students are taught social facts as natural facts with the former

often extolling the unquestioned virtues of nationalism and a neoliberal economy. Education becomes an exercise in repeating what was previously said in the classroom or guessing what is important to the teacher or test makers. This type of education simply prepares compliant workers for the labor market by habituating them to passive classroom behavior and passive citizens who consider their democratic obligations filled by voting at election time.

As an antithesis to state-mandated or banking education, Freire encourages teachers and students to discover and uncover issues important to expand their understanding of social reality. In such a classroom, the students and teachers become dialoguers who seek to understand their world by questioning prevailing attitudes and values, as well as the values and attitudes of other students. In the state-mandated education model, Freire feared that limited social and intellectual interaction fosters a benign learning experience that reduces students to easy victims of ideological manipulation.

Freire used the concept of "banking education," a concept we revisit throughout the text, to represent what he perceived as the traditional classroom. The depositor (i.e., teacher) makes deposits (i.e., facts and absolute facts) in the bank (i.e., the students) for future retrieval. Freire wrote, "Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to that act of cognition which unveils reality" (2000, p. 83). Thus, Freire would have students use their experiences in an educational environment built on problem-posing dialogue in order to help them "rename" the world and take control of their lives. Indeed, by renaming the world, students can take control of their contemplative rights to think in terms that emancipate them from their oppressors.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire never uses the words "experiential learning." Instead, a convincing argument can be made that problem-posing education exhibits many characteristics of experiential learning. Miller (2000) suggests that experiential learning is about reflecting on one's historical context, an argument Freire supported. Miller writes that, "Sometimes it is about encouraging learners to think about some aspect of their life history in new ways" (p. 74). In the contemporary classroom, student problems are often questions on tests that seldom reflect anything important about student lives or interests. According to Freire (2000),

> For the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the program content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition—bits of information to be deposited in the students—but rather the organized, systematized, and developed "re-presentation" to individuals of the things about which they want to know more. (p. 94)

In a nondialectic classroom, student interests are not part of the teaching–learning process. Instruction is based on efficiency models and subsequent accountability measures imposed on both teachers and students as a mechanism of state control. Freire's departure from orthodox methodology came with the following realization:

> In contrast with the antidialogical and non-communicative "deposits" of the banking method of education, the program content of the problem-posing method—dialogical par excellence—is constituted and organized by the students' view of the world, where their own generative themes are found. (Freire, 2000, p. 109)

Emphasis must be placed on the words "generative themes." These themes are the sum total of student life experiences. From these experiences, students teach themselves and others. From these teaching/learning experiences, students learn from others and about themselves through comparisons and interactions. Freire maintained that, "Thus, the process of searching for the meaningful thematics should include a concern for the links between themes, a concern to pose these themes as problems, and a concern for their historical-cultural context" (2000, p. 108). As students become aware of their historical context in dialogue with others, they have the opportunity and cognitive wherewithal to begin the process of humanization.

Problem-posing education has at its core a critical understanding of reason. This critical understanding is the product of examining power relationships. Knowledge is not enough. The added value of experiential learning comes from the interchange of ideas and knowledge. The sum of the parts borne from interaction between classroom equals (i.e., students/teacher and subject/topic) is greater than the whole. By incorporating student knowledge into the learning environment, they become full participants in a unique learning experience with transformative possibilities. Rather than using the traditional teaching method where students are passive participants in the process, they can become a key part of the process. Their vast knowledge can be explored and synthesized to create new knowledge and new social possibilities. Participants listen and question others about their beliefs and begin the process of dialectical change.

Summary

As we stated in the introduction to this chapter, Freire defined ontology as the "freedom to be" (2000, p. 146). Ontology embraces the notion that life is a journey and not a destination. It is a journey in which all humans work, eat, speak, criticize, read, disagree, come, go, and seek "the freedom to be." We believe that Freire's (2000) life work is based on reintroducing humans to their humanness and rejection of its antithesis, dehumanization:

> Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility. (p. 42)

Freire saw humanization as an ontological possibility yet he also recognized a multitude of obstacles. The possibility for humanization, as Freire saw it (1997), is grounded in hope: "Hope is an ontological requirement" (p. 44). Hope's antithesis, fatalism, leads humans to despair and alienation. Fatalism prevents humans from transforming their world. Instead, the world transforms humans, denies ontology, and promotes oppression.

The following passage from Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope* describes the effect of oppression on human ontology and reveals his view that all people, not just the oppressed, are dehumanized in the act of oppression:

> The oppressor is dehumanized in dehumanizing the oppressed. No matter that the oppressors eat well, be well regarded, or sleep well. It would be impossible to dehumanize without being dehumanized—so deep are the social roots of the *calling*. I am not, I do not be, unless you are, unless you be. Above all, I am not if I forbid you to be. (1998b, p. 99)

In Freire's view, then, dehumanization is reciprocal and existential. If a teacher dehumanizes students, then the teacher too is dehumanized. As Freire suggested in the preceding quote, humans cannot be fully human while they dehumanize others. Yet, Freire maintained that dehumanization's resolution is not within the grasp of the oppressors but it resides in the hands of the oppressed: "As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restored to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression" (Freire, 2000, p. 56).

Existentialism, discussed at length in Chapter 4, is at the core of Freire's solution to dehumanization. When humans critically engage the world, choices become alternatives and possibilities become realities. In Sartre's (1957) view, "it [thinking critically] confronts man with the possibility of choice" (p. 263). One can choose to act or not act but inaction is a form of action, a choice about how one acts in the world. Denying oppression does not eliminate oppression; it drives the roots of oppression deeper to hide reality. Thus, inaction has a dehumanizing effect on other humans and on one's self. According to Sartre (1957), "When we say every man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men" (p. 264). In denying any person's freedom to be, then, the freedom of the oppressors is also denied.

Being human, in Freire's (2000) view, requires various conditions; being human is a process of liberation, a process of inquiry, a process of constant transformation, and "a process in which all grow" (p. 80). The experience of humanization is constructed on the recognition that life is a journey of discovery and change, both personal and social. In the classroom as in the world, the dynamic process of being human is realized through inquiry, which leads to transformation in the students and teacher. In critical pedagogy, Freire (2000) contends, "arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid; in order to function, the authority must be *on the side of* freedom, not *against* it" (p. 80). The "authority" in this case is the teacher and culture, the epistemological originators of knowledge. In this example, freedom is the human right to question concrete situations in the world, to seek possible alternatives to these situations, and to engage in the transformation of the world. It is a journey to ontological completion. In the next chapter, we proceed to an analysis of Marxist and existentialist influence on Freire's ideas, pedagogy, and revolutionary spirit.

Chapter 4
Marxism, Existentialism, and Freire

Introduction

Freire was deeply influenced by Marxist philosophy both in terms of its technical elements as well its moral outrage with capitalist relations of production. The views of Karl Marx arguably comprise the greatest political influence of any major structuralist philosopher in history, and Freire was indeed deeply affected by Marx's analysis of history, society, and the exploitative relationship between capitalist economics and labor. One corresponding problem related to Marx's influence on both Freire and education is that so few teachers and students understand very much about his ideas, his influence on global economics and history, and, of more immediate importance, his tremendous impact on Freire's critical pedagogy. In this chapter we hope to redress that deficit.

Marx's influence has recently increased in academics circles with renowned scholars such as Joe Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, Michael Apple, Stanley Aronowitz, and Henry Giroux adopting Marxist style critiques in their scholarly work. McLaren in particular has come to view the postmodern alternative to Marxism as increasingly inept in its ability to afford a viable social and moral alternative to market economy ravages. In this chapter we explain some of Marx's core ideas and consider how these ideas shaped Freire's understanding of human nature, history, and education.

Existentialism and its relationship to agency and praxis also constitute a fundamental influence in Freire's work. As we argued in the previous chapter, such agency and freedom are essential requirements of humanization and therefore critical to Freirean pedagogy. In this chapter, we also discuss the relationship between existentialism, especially as articulated in the views of Jean Paul Sartre, and Freire. We also consider the consistency of Marxism and existentialism with Freire's overall pedagogical approach.

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Marxism as a Philosophical Force

Somewhat similar to Freire, and a good many other philosophers' most influential concepts, Marx's most famous ideas were not entirely original. The latter's copious writings and general philosophy were a composite of philosophic ideas drawn from a wide range of other philosophical influences. For example, Marx's view that history is shaped by class conflict was originally developed by Saint-Simon. The philosophy of Saint-Simon (1975), an 18th century French sociologist, was crucial for the general development of the social sciences: his call for a "science of society" on the same footing as the natural sciences greatly influenced his French disciple Auguste Comte who is described by some as the father of modern positivism (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007).

Saint-Simon (1975) was also the primary source of the scientific pretensions supporting the field of economics, pretensions that we continue to suffer from today. One might also include Thomas Carlyle, Michel Chevalier, and John Stuart Mill as disciples of Saint-Simonism (Stumpf, 1989). Saint-Simon's vision was highly influential on French society (and more generally on all of Europe) throughout the 19th century. The political influence of Saint-Simonism reached its pinnacle during the French July Revolution of 1830, but the general influence of Saint-Simon on future versions of socialism was more pronounced than captured by any single historical event. Saint-Simon's "scientism" was particularly influential on the development of early Marxist doctrine and—for that same reason—Saint-Simon was broadly and predictably condemned by advocates of capitalism (Stumpf, 1989).

Although Saint-Simon (1975) was one of the first to identify and label the process of "industrialization" as it was occurring in 19th-century Europe, his concern with the laboring classes was more reserved, although he recognized the "unnaturalness" of the unemployment caused by capitalism. In general, Saint-Simon's bourgeois elitism distinguished him from the later more "labor-orientated" socialist thinkers such as Marx and Engels. Saint-Simon's (1975) enthusiasm for the "spontaneous harmony" of the "organism" of industrial society has led to the claim that he was really a Classical Liberal, and hence antithetical to socialism as an economically egalitarian system. The Saint-Simonian critique of private property was first witnessed in the views of Rousseau and later adopted by Marx. But Saint-Simon was clearly a *dirigiste* in economic policy matters. A dirigiste is simply someone who supports a significant amount of government control over the economy. Here, then, the seeds of Marxism as a bulwark against capitalist control over politics and economic policy were clearly sown (Stumpf, 1989).

The labor theory of value, one of Marx's most notable contributions to economics, was originally formulated by 17th-century British empiricist John Locke. While Locke (1988) assumed that all resources found in nature were provided by God and therefore were common property, he argued that when people took things that had been present in a natural state and reshaped them into products of use for human beings, they mixed their labor with the raw materials, and thus had the right to personal ownership of the resulting products. Indeed, the products that a worker

produced became an extension of that worker. One of Marx's key criticisms of capitalism was that it separated workers from the products they created and therefore resulted in a form of alienation. However, Locke also employed the labor theory of value to justify private ownership of property, the cornerstone principle of capitalism. Locke (1988) planted the seeds of the Marxist perspective that human labor is the unique ingredient that creates value in commodities, and that the value of any product is approximately determined by the amount of labor that is necessary to produce the product in question. Marx took this idea one step further of course by suggesting that profit is labor unrewarded.

It was through a process of theory appropriation, amalgamation, and adjustment, then, that Marx eventually developed an overall philosophy that sounded a ringing condemnation of 19th-century capitalism, a system he was convinced was destined for inexorable failure and eventual collapse. As conditions presently stand some 170 years later, his dire prognostications for capitalism are increasingly being realized as major corporate structures and financial operations of the industrialized countries presently stand in considerable peril. However, in spite of present conditions, capitalism has proved exceptionally resilient and in spite of several near-collapses has been able to revitalize itself under new promises of general growth and prosperity.

Although Marx had the historic timing of endgame capitalism incorrect, there are many signals in the current economic crisis suggesting the paradigm shift he predicted is actually occurring. No government official has termed it such nor are they likely to do so, but when billions of public dollars are invested to prop up private financial institutions and entire major manufacturing sectors as is presently occurring in the United States and throughout many industrialized countries, we have reached a crisis point in neoliberalism. Perhaps we are finally witnessing at least the beginning of the turn toward socialism that Marx predicted. Marx's genius is also partially reflected in his uncanny ability to predict accurately so many outcomes related to capitalist economics and the plethora of forces leading to capitalist collapse. Perhaps one of Freire's greatest intellectual insights was his appreciation for just how accurate Marx's overall ideas about capitalism actually were. Capitalism is exploitative of labor, ensures/prefers a certain measure of poverty, and is alienating to workers in a variety of fashions.

The most dominant early philosophical influence on the young Karl Marx was undoubtedly that of F. W. Hegel (2007) who developed the concept of *dialectical idealism*. While studying Hegel, Marx became a member of the young Hegelians, a group that understood the concept of dialectical idealism as the key to understanding the development of human history. Hegel argued that the underlying rational basis of reality is an inexorable process unfolding from lower to higher degrees of perfection based on the history of human ideas. From this perspective history is understood as a dialectical process moving in a triadic pattern from thesis to antithesis and ultimately to a synthesis. This pattern repeats itself through various stages until some form of perfection is achieved and history, for all intents and purposes, comes to a permanent conclusion. The dialectical view of history and its final resolution as suggested by Hegel, and later Marx, is employed by Freire in the tension he describes between

the oppressed and the oppressors. However, the dialectical process permeates other areas of his philosophy including classroom interaction:

> The raison d'etre of libertarian education, on the other hand, lies in its drive toward reconciliation. Education must begin with a solution of the teacher – student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously [represented]. (Freire, 2000, p. 72)

Although Marx accepted the dialectical approach to understanding human history he ultimately rejected the view that ideas represent the driving force behind the dialectical change identified by Hegel. Much of Marx's shift in thinking from the ideal to the material resulted from the other major philosophical influence he encountered early in his life.

In addition to Hegel, Marx's other major philosophical influence was Ludwig Feuerbach who substituted the idealism driving Hegel's dialectic thinking with the material order or economic structure. In effect, Feuerbach (Stumpf, 1989) inverted Hegel's idealism and the resulting materialism provided Marx with one of the most powerful ideas to develop his own philosophy of history. However, it would be incorrect to suggest Marx simply accepted Feuerbach's position without adjustments as indicated in the following passage from Theses on Feuerbach:

> The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism - that of Feuerbach included - is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism–which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity. Hence, in The Essence of Christianity, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judicial manifestation. Hence he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical", activity. (Marx, 1938, Section I)

Rather than some abstract concept of God forming the final realization of history as Hegel suggested, Marx, following Feuerbach's general insight, believed that history was an attempt by humankind to overcome our own self-alienation driven by class divisions and the rupture between work and product attachment. If human history was a function of material forces, then the world should be transformed to afford the greatest possibility of individual and collective self-actualization. This led Marx to make the famous observation that, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world differently: the point is, however, to change it" (Marx cited in Tucker, 1978, p. 145).

This idea of transformative social change in the form of resolving dialectical tensions was to comprise a critically important component of Freire's overall pedagogical and social objectives. Whereas the ultimate resolution of Marxism is communism, for Freire resolution is achieved through conscientização. Indeed, both the notion of a dialectical relationship between opposing forces and agential change eventually advocated by the later Marx and *Praxis Marxism* stand at the heart of Freire's philosophy of education. It is also important to note that for Freire there is no final epoch, or end to history.

Marxism became the lens through which Freire understood the material relations of society and their impact on human experience. For example, Freire's pedagogy attempts to make visible the political nature of schooling, and the effects of unequal power relations affecting education that inevitably emerge from capitalist economies. Freire's pedagogical theory challenges ideas such as the supposed "meritocracy" that presents schooling opportunities as neutral processes rather than those that privilege the dominant classes. Kincheloe et al. (2000) describe the myth associated with this idea by examining how it impacts on racism in the US:

> The presumption of white supremacy is, of course, endemic to American culture, grounded as it is on the historical idea of Manifest Destiny. It was God's will that white Americans control the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In their presumed superiority, white people were and are bound by divine commitments to subdue the savages and to civilize them, it was and is the "White Man's Burden". (p. 367)

Hence, meritocracy is merely the confirmation and rationalization of this privilege manifested in the form of social reproduction. From this perspective, if white upper-middle class children achieve academically, it's not because of their social position, but because they possess the necessary merit.

Another central idea developed by Marx that clearly influenced Freire is the concept of *false consciousness*. Marx argued that working class members of society are manipulated by a range of ideological means, primarily through base/superstructure interaction, to adopt perspectives and values that actually harm their own interests while advancing the interests and increasing the social control of the ruling class or hegemony. The economic base for Marx consisted of those interests owning the means of production, means of distribution and, more generally, those situated to benefit the most from the class and ethnic ravages of capitalism.

The economic superstructure included the prevailing ideas of any given period, ideas that in Marx's view were designed to ensure the reproduction of prevailing class relations and protect hegemonic interests. Ideas and actions in capitalist society, even when they ostensibly appear to be otherwise, are organized in such a fashion to reproduce the privilege of the ruling elite. Corporate interests control the media and report the news in such a way that marginalizes alternative economic visions or options. For example, President Obama is described as a socialist for bailing out corporate organizations, but would be criticized readily for not bailing out these companies. The ideological point is that attention toward the collapse of neoliberal capitalism can be shifted to criticism of an African American president and socialism. During the current economic collapse, of course, socialism is portrayed as something to be avoided at all costs by networks such as CNN and FOX rather than a genuine live option in the face of capitalism's failure.

In a Marxist analysis of base/superstructure interaction, education and schools are components of the economic superstructure that benefit the wealthy in a number of ways, including wrapping students in ruling ideology (Althusser, 1973). Current education programs that focus on topics such as lifelong learning, critical thinking, and character education as instrumental outcomes all produce students who are less

likely to question the fundamental principles and organization of capitalist society (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009).

What is left out of most public schooling programs, the so-called null curriculum, is more telling than what is included. These omissions leave students ignorant of viable social and economic alternatives, and the violence suffered by feminist, civil rights, and worker movements, and all critical events that underscore the primary importance of human agency in invoking change. One is exceptionally hard pressed to find high school economics courses that spend any measurable time, if any time at all, discussing Marxism. Further, when relevant information about topics such as the economy, history, and labor market conditions are omitted from educational dialogue, powerful signals are sent to students about what information is important and, perhaps even more worrying, about their potential role in structural decision making. As Kincheloe et al. (2000) point out, agency is central to overthrowing the deleterious impact of ideology:

> Once informed and organized, students can unmask hegemonic ideology's attempts to hide social conflict. The presence of agency (self-direction) serves to extend an individual's or group's domain of control. A sense of its absence – the absence of one's own influence – develops when gaps between various economic and cultural resources (power) become evident. (p. 410)

The epistemic marginalization of labor perspectives, for example, is at least partly responsible for the decline in membership and the general view even among members of the working class that unions have outlived their usefulness in new wave capitalism. Such a perspective is, of course, fundamentally self-destructive since labor confronts profound abuses at corporate institutions such as WalMart. These contemporary workplaces construct an employment environment where wages are low and all employees other than management are kept on part-time hours to avoid paying the benefits associated with full-time employment. More generally, the current economic and social structure, as part of the ideological superstructure, is typically presented to students as unproblematic and many curricular documents describe these conditions in ahistorical terms as the new *social reality*, and compel students to prepare for these labor conditions rather than participate in shaping them.

Of course, what Freire understood so well is that there is no social reality beyond the one created by human action, a critically important point for all students and teachers to remember. From a Freirean perspective, people should be viewed as historical subjects capable of transforming their own lived realities, who act upon the world, as opposed to objects who are acted upon by privileged economic interests. At the heart of Freire's transformative learning approach is appreciating that individuals may refashion their identities in opposition to social problems. That is, students are encouraged to take up positions as critical analysts and political agents to reshape the conditions of their experience.

Although Marx's early determinism was inconsistent with the notion of agency central to Freire, the former's later perspective embraced the role of praxis in social transformation. This position is perhaps best revealed in *The German Ideology* (1976) written in consort with his close friend and intellectual colleague Frederich Engels:

> It is possible to achieve real liberation only in the real world and by real means . . . people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in inadequate quality and quantity. Liberation is a historical and not a mental act. (p. 44)

Freire's indebtedness to Marx included understanding the impact of material conditions on human agency. However, the former extends this understanding further by viewing liberation not entirely as a historical act (although this recognition is important), but as a mental act as well. Change in the form of social transformation could only occur through the reflection/recognition and action of the oppressed to free themselves from oppressive conditions.

False consciousness for Marx was the primary ideological mechanism that creates thought patterns in students and others that prevent any opportunity to entertain alternative social visions. For Marx, religion was the archetype of false consciousness since it encouraged working-class individuals to pursue posthumous gratification for suffering rather than transforming their present circumstances. Instead, they act in what are actually self-defeating sorts of ways. In his own writings, Freire adopts the general ideological thrust of false consciousness in his concept of *false generosity*.

False generosity, a term that actually originated with Frederich Engels, refers to a type of generosity that in effect is designed to perpetuate the prevailing conditions of human oppression by temporarily relieving abject human suffering. In other words generosity is employed only to that extent to which it temporarily alleviates current suffering caused by capitalism without addressing or fixing the structural causes of that suffering. An example is social programs such as social assistance or employment insurance where individuals are provided with subsistence levels of income rather than addressing the actual causes of class inequality more generally, or fixing the lack of meaningful employment opportunities. False generosity, by easing potential antagonisms against the prevailing structural conditions, does little more than prop up an economic and social system that necessarily marginalizes a portion of the population. To avoid false generosity, any temporary assistance must be accompanied by education that explains why such suffering occurs needlessly but inevitably within a capitalist economy. It must address the structural causes of material suffering.

Another one of Marx's central ideas that clearly influenced Freire was that human alienation inevitably results among labor from capitalist exploitation and production methods. The relationship of the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the means of production, to the proletariat, the workers or laborers, rests upon a fundamental contradiction. Although both classes in capitalism contribute to the production of products and the delivery of services, the return from their respective contributions is not shared fairly. There is an inherent and inevitable exploitation of workers within capitalism that permits the capitalist to make a profit on the backs of workers. Labor costs in capitalism are determined by supply and demand rather than the actual work put into the production of a product by the worker. Ernsberger (2009) provides an example of how this works in practice:

> A worker in a factory is given $30 worth of material, and after working 3 hours producing a good, and using $10 worth of fuel to run a machine, he creates a product which is sold for $100. According to Marx, the labor and only the labor of the worker increased the value of the natural materials to $100. The worker is thus justly entitled to a $60 payment, or $20 per hour. If the worker is employed by a factory owner who pays him only $15 per hour, according to Marx, the $5 per hour the factory owner receives is simply a rip off. The factory owner has done nothing to earn the money and the $5 per hour he receives is "surplus value", representing exploitation of the worker. Even the tools that the factory owner provided were, according to Marx, necessarily produced by other workers. (n.p.)

Profit, then, is derived from the surplus value of labor in products sold and services delivered that is not returned to the worker in the form of wages. More directly stated, profit is derived from skimming off the actual value of the work completed. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2000) describes this exploitation as follows:

> Dehumanizaton, which marks not only humanity stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not a historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. (p. 28)

Freire argues, then, humans are necessarily exploited and dehumanized by the unequal social relations and surplus labor value embedded within capitalism. However, he is far less prepared than the early Marx to accept the inexorable historical dialectic associated with the struggle for changing this relationship. Rather, more consistent with Marx's evolving perspective, he views human agency as playing an important role to provoke progressive social reform.

Marx's analysis assumed that the *labor theory of value* meant that within capitalist societies worker exploitation was not merely an isolated occurrence that happened occasionally but was, in fact, a necessary element of the economic system itself. This observation is critical in evaluating the moral acceptability of capitalism. Although Marx himself offered no overt moral judgment on this element of capitalism, he saw the exploitation of workers and the capitalist mode of production more generally leading toward increased degrees of worker alienation.

Marx suggested that within a capitalist framework workers are not only alienated from the products of their labor since the latter are removed from them, but also through the process of production itself. By its very design, capitalist labor is external to the worker not an extension of his or her nature, and work is often forced upon individuals by economic necessity rather than freely chosen. In sum the alienation of workers from their labor and from themselves generates a breakdown in human relationships since individuals, in effect, also become alienated from each other. The result is the complete objectification of human beings where we evaluate our relationships with others based solely on potential exchange value (Stumpf, 1989). Our emotional life becomes subsumed in a world where even intimate relationships are determined by capital exchange.

Freire's dialectic of the oppressors and the oppressed is based at least partially on Marx's critique of alienation as the commodification of workers. The individual is

transformed into an object not only as a powerless worker, but also through a combination of objectifying forces such as the state, the schools, the media, the family, and other cultural spheres. The oppressed are particularly vulnerable to objectification given their marginal and subordinate status, and their general submersion into a "culture of silence." As objects, then, the oppressed are prevented from being human subjects. They are not actors, but instead are acted upon—tools to be exploited serving the interests of the economic elite. They do not reflect on their lives and their social conditions, but are told what to think and what to be. Freire's goal, of course, was to turn them into subjects who would carry out a revolutionary project of collective emancipation and to create a society where such emancipation is possible.

Change as a Dialectical Process

Contemporary education literature includes a wide range of imperatives directing teachers and learners toward pedagogies of personal transformation and social change. This movement as a general trend is easily traceable to one strand of the progressive movement that began as early as the 1940s. These arguments, then, are not new and are, at least in part, rooted in the understanding of constant historical change that evolves through a dialectical evolutionary process driven by inexorable movement toward some more perfect form (progress) of moral and/or material resolution. However, Freire (2000) was less than comfortable with the view that progress, human or otherwise, was an inevitable historical outcome:

> When they [Marxists] speak about the death of history, of ideologies, of utopia, and about the disappearance of social classes, they make me certain that they defend a posterior sort of fatalism. It is as if they regret not having stated the domestication of the future sooner. The mechanists of Marxist origin deproblematized the future and reduced it to a premade, preknown time; those who now defend the end of history welcome the "new time," the time of "definitive victory" for capitalism, as a future that was late in coming but finally here. They wipe out sixty years of human achievement with a sponge, considering it an error of history finally corrected. (p. 155)

The fatalism present in both vulgar Marxism and neoliberal capitalism was troubling to Freire because it eroded the primary role of human agency in creating change and eliminated history in the process. For Freire, resolving the dialectical tension between the oppressed and the oppressors required a far more ongoing struggle, one that really had no specific end.

The idea of achieving full potentiality through some process was initiated in ancient Eurocentric thinking by Aristotle. In fact, the idea of an underlying dialectical process, and the personal and social change such a process initiates, is traceable all the way back to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c. 470 BCE) who considered transformation and change a historical constant. Heraclitus observed that, "you cannot step into the same river twice" (cited in Palmer, 2001, p. 26), meaning of course not that you cannot actually step in the same "river" but the same

water flowing in the river. The water represented a metaphor for the constant change or state of flux that Heraclitus viewed as the dominant element of human experience. Change is constant and inevitable and humankind is caught in the current and underlying logos of this perpetual change.

Through his observation of constant change Heraclitus, as a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, observed that the world is in a continual process of creation and destruction, a type of eternal tension that resolves itself only to be repeated in a renewed and never-ending process. Palmer (2001) explains that within Heraclitean philosophy, "there existed an unobservable logos—a logic—governing change that made change a rational phenomenon rather than the chaotic, arbitrary one it appeared to be" (p. 27). In suggesting this underlying logos, or reason, to change, Heraclitus established the initial perspective on history as an understandable process of dialectic that followed a particular and identifiable pattern. What the position also suggested, however, was that human agency played virtually no role in affecting the changes that occurred. This fatalistic perspective suggests that we cannot step in the same river twice nor can we change its path determined by the logos. This is, then, the type of dialectical thinking and change adopted by the early Marx but where Freire charted an entirely different course.

Centuries after Heraclitus, Hegel once again embraced the dialectic process as an explanation of historical change through his theory of dialectical idealism. The rational basis of reality, or the "idea," is in a continuous process of unfolding from lower to higher degrees of perfection beginning with the primordial tension between being and non-being, and ultimately working itself out in the final resolution of God as pure being. In some sense, then, Hegel might be accused of beginning with a metaphysical presupposition and attempting to find a process to justify a presupposition, or to justify through reason a worldview he already believed. To his intellectual credit, Marx of course adopted a more earthly solution, although still doggedly deterministic initially, to address the issue of historical dialectic and the social evolution of humankind.

Hegel had argued that the historical dialectic generates temporary resolutions to tensions but never leads to absolute truth. In his detailed history of philosophy Stumpf (1989) observes that Hegel viewed reality as a dynamic if deterministic process: "History is a dialectic process moving in triadic pattern from thesis to antithesis and finally to synthesis" (p. 429). In many ways, in spite of their considerable differences, Hegel contributed significantly to Marx's historical analysis of reality. Freire was no stranger to either philosopher's writings and ideas.

The idea of an ongoing tension between opposing forces was a central component in Freire's philosophy of change and yet he saw the role of humankind in prompting such change as a far more active and decidedly moral one: "In a dialectic, nonmechanistic conception of history, the future evolves from the transformation of the present as it occurs. Thus, the future takes on a problematic and undetermined character. The future is not what it needs to be, but what we make of it in the present" (1996, p. 111).

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx formulated his basic political doctrine, which he presented as original, in spite of his direct influence from Hegel

and Feuerbach. Marx believed he had demonstrated that different economic classes were bound up with particular historic phases within the dialectic framework that included a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. While working in London, he worked out what he believed was a scientific grounding for his pronouncements about history in the *Manifesto*. This supposedly scientific theory became universally known as *dialectical materialism* (Stumpf, 1989).

Since this is a major difference from Freire, it is important to emphasize that for Marx, the dialectical process was material, scientific, and deterministic in nature. Certainly for the early Marx, human inclinations or behaviors had little effect on what was for him an inexorable process of historical social and economic evolution. There is of course much more to say about Marx's theory of history and the underlying tensions in his writing. These tensions reveal a moral outrage with capitalism far beyond any underlying scientific or determined historical process. The shift from a mere deterministic process of transformation toward a process envisioned and directed by humans would find full expression in the work of Paulo Freire. It is also expressed in Praxis Marxism, an idea we explore fully in Chapter 5.

Dialectic was for Freire more than a way to understand and explain history. He also employed dialectic as a mechanism for people to understand their constructed experiences that situate them economically, socially, and psychologically. Dialectic, rather than the underlying deterministic processes identified by Hegel and Marx, is the practice of looking at problems from multiple trajectories and willingly creating change through education, agency, and political action. For example, Freire subjects a thesis to its antithesis, or to an opposite perspective. The subsequent analysis of the competing or contradictory concepts would open students to other ideas and potentially innovative solutions. Dialectic, as Freire employed it, is a type of Socratic questioning, a continual process of inquiry intended to develop a synthesis to deconstruct social reality. From an arrived-at synthesis emerges a new antithesis out of which a new synthesis is created. In addition to his oppressor and oppressed distinction, Freire used dialectic, then, to foster learner understanding about the dynamic nature of the world and the role of agency in generating change. There is no end to history but merely a perpetual need to question and resolve ever-emerging tensions between the oppressed and the oppressors. The end of history would precipitate the end of inquiry and, therefore, the end of humanization.

Freire encouraged students, primarily illiterate agricultural workers, to solve problems by looking for alternatives in an approach that to a certain degree resembles postmodern deconstruction. He believed that people are more likely to make the correct decision when they are provided with an opportunity to resolve problems by exploring alternatives or an antithesis to prevailing circumstances—by turning a situation upside down to see how it looks from the other side.

In Freire's view (2000), a correct decision is guided by action that recognizes the humanization of people as a foundational principle for judgment: "[humanization] is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; [humanization] is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by the struggle to recover their lost humanity" (p. 42). Freire employed historical criticism and dialectic to demonstrate contradictions in social relations:

for instance, he used "oppressor and oppressed," "humanized and dehumanized," "powerful and powerless," "student and teacher," and "false generosity and true generosity" to emphasize oppositional social relations that required resolution. These bifurcations are helpful in illuminating the points Freire seeks to establish, but they also might be accused of over simplifying the complex nature of social organization and human interaction.

Freire subjected his own life and work to a similar type of dialectical criticism. His writings are typically in the form of a first-person narrative open to the type of criticism we offer above. He recognized that reflection on practice holds the potential for transformation by highlighting potential alternatives and (2000) explained the connection between critical understanding and reflection in the following fashion:

> People will be truly critical if they live the plentitude of the praxis, that is, if their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality. (p. 131)

The entire idea of dialectic as both a process and an analytic approach is not without critics. Some feminist theorists have suggested that the dominant conception of the dialectic denies women the opportunity for transcendence and that the dialectic of radical pedagogy is inadequate for an increasingly pluralistic culture and a reconstructed dialectic must engage feminist thought which incorporates a multiplicity of dialectics as opposed to the simple bifurcations we note above, a practice that will ultimately bring about positive social change. Hence, the world cannot be neatly divided into two mere categories, in this case male and female (or oppressed and oppressors), but includes a plethora of groups and even individuals with different contexts, existential objectives, and needs unrelated to falsely imposed taxonomies. The developing richer understanding of the transgender and intersexual movements highlights the problematic classifications that often emerge from scientific analysis and imposed classifications and categorizations.

The danger in a dialectical approach, then, is its simple bifurcation of problems and the sharp categorization of supposedly distinct groups. It potentially exaggerates differences while vastly over simplifying perceived similarities. For example, Freire's dialectic between the oppressed and the oppressors seemingly neglects the reality that an individual may fall into both categories not only in the course of his/her life, but also in a single day's actions. This is not an observation with which Freire would necessarily disagree. The purpose of these two categories is not so much the rigid placement of different individuals into particular roles, the forcing of individuals into constructed categories, but rather as forms of action that humans have a choice to pursue based on different understandings. In some sense, they represent for Freire mere headings under which other actions, emotions, and concerns may be grouped together rather than referring to specific groups of individuals. He understood very well that far too often in the history of social transformation and revolutionary movements the oppressed simply become oppressors themselves.

Freire's critical reflection through the dialectic he created led him to conclude that capitalist social reality fosters untold suffering in countless people without regard for gender, ethnicity, or even class since the white and wealthy are also victimized in particular sorts of ways, even when the deleterious consequences of capitalism are less obvious in their manifestation. In order to mediate this suffering, he proposed intellectually engaging all people as rational beings and encouraging subsequent political action to resolve the dialectic he identified. To some extent, then, he actually transcends his own bifurcation by recognizing the multifarious forces acting on social construction. An individual might be oppressed at work while, at the same time, act as an oppressor with his family. It is the values represented by the dialectic terms that are the problem rather than specific characters or individuals.

Allman (1999) maintains that one cannot fully understand the rich complexity of Freire's work without understanding Marx's theoretical contexts:

> I know from my own experiences that if you abstract Freire's ideas from their Marxist theoretical context, you will miss the precision of his analysis and ignore the revolutionary or transformative intent of his work. (p. 90)

Materialist dialectic studies the origin and development of our knowledge of the outside world based on economic relations. It studies the transition from not knowing to knowing and from incomplete knowledge to more complete knowledge; it studies how the laws of the development of nature and society are daily reflected more profoundly and more extensively in the mind and interactions of humanity.

In the work of both Marx and Freire there is a relationship or interaction between materialist dialectics, and epistemology and metaphysics. The essence of the concept of development consists in regarding laws as the reflection and transplanting in our minds (moreover further elaborated in our minds) the manifestations of the movement of matter. This makes the theory deterministic only in the sense that by using materialism to arrive at a solution of the problem of the relations between existence and thought, only by taking one's stand on the theory of the reflection, can one arrive at a thorough solution to the problems of dialectics, logic, and epistemology (Stumpf, 1989). Marx's historical determinism led him to conclude that humans would ultimately synthesize their antithetical ideologies into a new social order, that of course being communism. Unlike Marx, Freire did not offer a concrete prediction about the future. He maintained instead that the future would be determined by humans but its trajectory was uncertain and entirely the outcome of human agency and moral maturity.

Although the dialectical understanding of social construction described by Marx and adopted by Freire has obvious epistemological implications, the idea of the dialectic remains, at least for the most part, metaphysical in nature. Ultimately, it relies on a rather simplistic bifurcation of social organization and human behavior that, while perhaps appealing at one level, seems woefully inadequate, as feminists (Hekman, 1995) point out, at another. The human tendency to understand and label the world in dialectical terms affords no guarantee that some underlying historical process is actually at work—in the final analysis it is a nonempirical assumption.

Further, the adoption by Freire of the oppressed and the oppressor bifurcation far too neatly categorizes and differentiates a vast array of human actions, emotions, and motives. Such a view may in itself engender certain ideological and moral divisions that Freire actually was trying to resolve. In some sense, labeling the world through differences propagates those differences and sets up barriers between different people. Hence, the dialectical portion of Freire's overall theory, and the misunderstanding it generates, may be the weakest link in his otherwise insightful and important contributions to critical pedagogy.

Certainly, Marx's early view of history generating inevitable socialism can be described as deterministic—a view that evolved into a far more moral and political transformative perspective through his work with Frederich Engels. The early Marx believed that one historical event inevitably led to the next and the present is the culmination of these antecedent causal relationships. Marx viewed capitalism as one of those historically determined steps and likened it to a spell unleashed by a genie: Once the spell was cast, it could not be undone. Although materialism may indeed be a reality in determining human society, the causal antecedents are undoubtedly more complex than mere class conflicts or antagonisms. The very idea of class is at its core a human construction, an imposed division to separate one person from another, and clearly not all members of a single socioeconomic group share in either consciousness or objectives. This problem is perhaps most apparent in the failure of workers to develop what Marx referred to as "class consciousness."

In Marx's view, communism was the natural outcome of previous historical antagonisms between labor and capital. The adversarial relations that began in Europe would continue until such time the injustices and contradictions of high mass production were eliminated by the proletariat. Marx, again in a manner adopted by Freire, also believed that class antagonisms found in historical reality determine human behaviors. In other words, ideology in the form of class distinction and hegemonic relations determines how humans think and behave. From this perspective, the bourgeoisie are determined by social organization to be oppressors interested primarily in protecting class interests. The proletariat is denied their humanity by the oppression of the bourgeoisie. Freire recognized that the oppressed internalize the values and worldview of their oppressors and that leads to their acceptance and reproduction of the prevailing ideology and social order. This was yet another idea, of course, that was derived from Marx's understanding of ideological inculcation and manipulation of the working class through base/superstructure interaction.

Freire adopted Marx's analysis of contradictory social relations and it similarly formed the basis of his moral outrage with capitalism's inequities. Marx was also convinced that capitalist ideology created the human "self" image. They both agreed, or at least Freire agreed with Marx, that the lower classes accepted the dominant class as examples of humanness, and worked toward achieving that status and adopting those values. From such examples of humanness, subordinates had an objective for their social and ontological aspirations. The lower classes see hope in being like their oppressors, a worry that concerned Freire immensely since it

perpetuated the entire oppressor and oppressed relationship. The goal of the oppressed ought not to be to become oppressors, but emancipators from the oppression that victimizes everyone.

Marx's analysis of social organization relied on an analysis of history to reveal what he perceived as an inescapable truth about human reality and social progress. Within human history, he correctly recognized that ideology shapes human consciousness. Dominant class interests subordinate other ideologies. In order to legitimize bourgeoisie interests, the owners of production developed a political order based largely on a centralized government located in urban sites. In many respects, this centralized government or centralization of power mirrored the lord and vassal relation. In Marx's view, such a concentration of power parallels the mode of production found in feudal Europe and leads inevitably to oppression through the unequal economic and political relations that emerge.

In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx argued that "capitalism needs an oppressed and an oppressor" (cited in Tucker, 1978, p. 475), a phrase obviously appropriated by Freire. Without a subjugated contingent of workers willing to support uneven social and material relations, the owners of production are powerless. If the proletariat relies on the owners of production, then the workers are powerless. As revealed in the neoliberal era, the mechanisms employed to divide workers are numerous and effective. They include the vilifying of unions and labor movements, placing false blame on workers (in a contemporary sense this could be the auto industry) for economic decline, and increased competition between workers for fewer and fewer quality employment prospects. The hopes of both Marx and Freire rest in part on the development of some form of worker/oppressed collective conscious shift, a hope that history has thus far not delivered.

In spite of the absence of class consciousness the current economic collapse provides a classic example of how Marx's analysis of capitalist ideology is accurate in revealing how political decisions affecting class organization and the distribution of wealth occur. Even in times of obvious structural collapse where the capitalist system's worst moral, economic, social, and political violence is exposed for all to see and experience, the system itself escapes virtually all scrutiny that would seriously threaten to reorganize the economic system into a more equitable model. The ideological machinery, primarily through mainstream and corporate-owned media, kicks into high gear and we witness a further attack on the workers in the form of additional concessions, job losses, and so on to "stay competitive." The working class, in the meantime, continues to be pushed to the very margins of survival with the real interest clearly in maintaining corporate wealth by protecting the financial interests of the corporate class. When an infusion of public money, taxpayer dollars, is used to pay off corporate CEOs for their incompetent management of an economic system whose collapse financially destroyed so many lives, our society has been completely manipulated by hegemonic ideology. Those who suffer economically are ironically forced to pay those who cause their suffering.

Adopting Marx's notion of dialectic change, Freire also employs this adversarial or antagonistic social arrangement to describe the origin of violence within human relations, yet he modifies it slightly. For example, as we pointed out

earlier he viewed all people as potential oppressors in particular contexts and potentially oppressed regardless of social class, gender, or ethnic distinctions. Oppression often transcends class or economic boundaries since the oppressors are oppressed in their oppression of others. One cannot be humanized and an oppressor simultaneously because oppression robs individuals of a necessary condition for humanization. Although both are dehumanizing, Freire also draws an important distinction between ontological and physical oppression. Regardless of oppression's form, the act of oppressing another human, in his view, is reciprocal. In other words, it ultimately oppresses the oppressor. According to Freire (2000), "The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves" (p. 43).

Freire clearly relied heavily on Marx's analysis of social relations, but Marx, and by extension Freire, have many critics. Marx was a sociologist and his analysis of history and social relations provides rich theoretical perspectives that seek to circumscribe reality within a particular philosophical framework. The theory of dialectical materialism, while interesting and perhaps even containing some measure of historical truth, is ultimately an unsatisfactory explanation of human experience because of its taxonomic oversimplification, its notion that history has an end, and its failure to recognize human agency as a critical transformative force. For others, Marx offers a theory of static human relations in communism where the state determines human needs, not the people—although this perspective probably constitutes a misreading of communism where the state is actually comprised of the people. The many failures of socialism, perhaps explainable within the theories of Marx and Freire (especially reflected in the latter's concern of the oppressed becoming oppressors), must also be considered when evaluating all of these ideas. Socialist supporters must admit and confront these failures by asking at a level of deep personal intellectual honesty why the socialist experiment has suffered so many abuses and ended so badly far too often.

As we have pointed out above, there are many commonalities, both theoretical and moral between Marx and Freire. However, there are many differences as well. For example, Godonoo (1998) correctly maintains that, "to read Freire and come away with the notion that he is merely another neo-Marxist is to sell him short" (p. 31). Such an observation rings especially true with regard to Freire's pedagogical ideas for, unlike Marx who devoted almost no narrative to education, the former sees it as the primary vehicle for initiating change. Freire's philosophical synthesis embraced Marx's historical dialectic while rejecting its material determinism, a point we pick up on in our forthcoming discussion of existentialism.

For Marx, the geographical environment was based on geopolitical and economic boundaries and not topographical formations or natural resources. He recognized that technology and the opening of the Americas to European goods would alter traditional social relations in Europe and the Americas, but no doubt underestimated the resiliency of capitalism as an exploitative system promising personal success that tapped into the deepest psychological needs and longings of human experience. Freire recognized geographic boundaries played some role in determining human economics but he saw no limit to the violence or spread of neoliberal capitalism. In

particular, he condemned neoliberalism's colonization of the globe as primarily a source of cheap labor to benefit members of the corporate class. The system would not die a natural death as Marx predicted, but rather must be put out of its misery by human decision making and action.

Freire used Marx's concept of oppositional social relations and production of goods to contextualize capitalism's violence. Godonoo (1998) observes that, "Freire's philosophical posture has a rich menu of an intellectual socio-human recipe that is capable of empowering the different spatial needs of humanity" (p. 31). According to Freire (2000), "Humans, however, because they are aware of themselves and thus of the world—because they are *conscious beings*—exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom" (p. 99). The determination of limits is a product of social construction by corporate interests and can be supplanted or reshaped by humans through praxis. Its replacement is possible because of the essential human ability to question and transform the world. Freire (1998a) asserted that humans are biologically predisposed to be questioning animals: "though we are programmed, we are nevertheless not determined" (p. 98).

The issue at hand—what Baudrillard (1989) has suggested is a pseudo-question—of what human behavior is causally determined by ideological, genetic, or other forces is probably indeterminate in any definite sense. But the bifurcation offered to prompt this question in the first place constitutes a philosophical fallacy. Indeed, we may not be able to determine whether an action or event such as the emergence of capitalism is completely determined or one based on conscious human decision making, but there are nonetheless mechanisms we might employ to help us make this distinction. One of us has argued elsewhere that exploring the causal history of belief formation holds great promise in this area. When coercive interference with belief formation is clearly identified then beliefs ought to be re-examined for their authenticity (Hyslop-Margison, 2005).

In Freire's view, then, humans are not hopelessly ensconced as objects in history, geography, or caught in the current of deterministic materialism, but are capable of rising above their social and environmental circumstances. Freire believed that people transcend the structural forces of historical materialism when they are able to freely question their experiences. Godonoo (1998) suggests that Freire was certain humans would "denounce the plundering of humanity by oppressors" (p. 35). It is such belief in agency that leads us toward the hope and absolute freedom of Sartre's existentialism.

Obviously, much of Freire's work was compiled in advance of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and a comprehensive analysis of Marxism and its various progenies, as we pointed out earlier, must recognize those failures. The collapse of the Soviet bloc revealed some fundamental problems in socialist ideology as practical lived reality and the failure, at least to this point in history, to create the class consciousness and egalitarian society Marx had envisioned. Freire provides the means to resolve these practical problems by also proposing a sweeping shift in values rather than simply political change and social reorganization. Sadly, we have not escaped the values of neoliberal capitalism in spite of major socialist movements around the world. Indeed, the last major communist nation, China, is ironically the

bulwark of contemporary capitalism, often embracing its worst excesses and abuses. However, for a modicum of hope we might also look to countries such as Cuba, a nation that has overcome profound US interference and subversion by retaining the revolutionary spirit of its people through the leadership of Fidel Castro. There is much work to complete to bring about a socialist society based on truly egalitarian principles and we firmly believe that Paulo Freire, with his considerable debt to Marxist insights, will ultimately prove a key figure in leading the way to help us reach this destination. The required change to history is not inexorable, but requires instead a conscious expression of human freedom and possibility.

Freire and Existentialism

Seemingly paradoxical to Marx's deterministic theory of history, Freire also embraced Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophical assumptions supporting the belief in absolute human freedom. Sartre's existentialism is a philosophy of "being" and "existence." Yet "being" cannot be understood through purely rational thought, it must be understood as well through existence and lived experience. Freire's philosophy of education encapsulates both of these understandings.

Palmer (2001) offers a description of existentialism as experience viewed through a lens free of advance human interpretation. For example, if a boulder blocks my path while scaling a mountain, its existence or its "facticity" cannot be denied. However, humans will interpret the event depending on their particular conscious state and related decision making. One cannot change the fact that a boulder is blocking the path, but one can freely decide how one approaches the situation. According to Freire, "The question between conscience/world that involves their mutual relations led Sartre to observe that, 'conscience and the world take place at the same time'" (1997, p. 34).

There is always the opportunity to choose, including the choices that confront us in the most difficult of circumstances. We might choose to turn around with the boulder blocking our path, viewing it as an insurmountable obstacle. We could choose to try and go around it or climb over it, or even seek assistance from others to roll the boulder from our way. The point is that we can make decisions regardless of the hurdles or difficulties we confront, even though their facticity (the boulder certainly rests in our intended path) is beyond dispute, and these decisions impact directly on our existential experience in the world.

Sartre's version of existentialism, the one we focus on herein, embraces an ontological analysis that views humans as identical to other entities to the extent the former are simply objects possessing being in the same manner as trees, mountains, or flowers. However, unlike these other entities, humans also possess a consciousness that effectively separates them from the world of things. Sartre argues that consciousness perceives the world as an intelligible system of separate and interrelated entities because it projects this structure upon the world. In the absence of the order imposed by consciousness, he considers the world simply as being-in-itself, existing as an absolute plenum without any organization,

purpose, or meaning. Sartre's world as being-in-itself, then, reflects the ancient Greek Parmenides' view that reality is a singularity where being is one rather than many, and is indivisible, indestructible, eternal, and equally real in all directions. Two major implications emerge from the supposed dynamic interaction between consciousness and the world of things. First, consciousness actually defines the various experiences it encounters by investing them with meaning. Second, since consciousness is abstracted from the other objects of experience, it enjoys the corresponding capacity to confer alternative interpretations on various events such as the rock in the path scenario we refer to above (Hyslop-Margison, 2003).

The capacity to impose interpretations on experience suggests that humans are "condemned to be free" since they must also accept personal accountability for everything they choose. In Sartre's view, most individuals typically reject this freedom, and the personal responsibility it entails, until they are forced to confront the spontaneous nature, singular quality, and mortal character of existence as part of their lived experience. The attempted escape from human immortality, in particular, is a central feature of Sartre's existentialism and search for authenticity since a retreat into religion is an attempt to escape the freedom lying at the core of authentic human experience. The rejection of religion creates an initial problem for Freire and his adoption of liberation theology. For Sartre, religion distorts lived experience by imposing an artificial lens through which the world is perceived. Regardless of whatever positive values a given religion might afford, this distortion prevents humans from accepting the personal responsibility required to invoke the personal and social change Freire envisions. Hence, once again, the inclusion of formal religion in his argument creates insurmountable inconsistencies.

Within a culture where immortality is often presupposed in the form of some religious conviction, cataclysmic or psychologically disturbing events—even perhaps extreme boredom manifested in alienation—might be required to jolt consciousness into an authentic awareness. The false generosity referred to by Freire provides an example of how authenticity (the acceptance of one's actual reasons for acting) is constantly under siege and the forces of ideological manipulation omnipresent. In Sartre's novel Nausea, Roquentin, the protagonist, confronts the frightening singularity and mortality of being when he stares despairingly at the knotted roots of a chestnut tree and observes that, "there's nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing." At that particular moment, Sartre's character is forced to grapple with the pathological feeling many humans experience when they recognize the accidental, absurd, mortal, and sometimes tragic nature of human existence (Sartre cited in Hyslop-Margison, 2003):

> The roots [of the tree], the park railings, the bench, the sparse grass on the lawn, had all disappeared; the diversity, the individuality of things was a mere illusion, a veneer. The veneer had splintered, leaving monstrous flabby, disorganized masses; terrifyingly and obscenely naked. (p. 69)

Such experiences afford pivotal points of existential revelation by forcing a personal confrontation with the primordial, accidental, and inevitably mortal nature of human existence. Not only is being vulnerable, or even expendable, within such a

spontaneous and potentially terrifying world, existence itself seems a cosmic illogicality masquerading behind artificially instantiated or constructed truth. Perhaps the key quality characterizing bad faith is that an individual subconsciously recognizes he/she is living a lie, but nevertheless chooses to do so. Sartre (1957) explains,

> The one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. There must be an original intention and a project of bad faith. It follows first that the one to whom the lie is told and the one who lies are one and the same person, which means I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived. (p. 157)

The predictable reaction of those choosing to live in bad faith would be to impose traditional structure and meaning on lived experience as quickly as possible. Individuals choosing to live in continued bad faith, for example, might embrace prevailing capitalist ideology and adopt the values of their oppressors because there's emotional comfort in choosing the social status quo. The pedagogical result is that such responses preclude critical investigation into the causes of oppression coming from the prevailing social structure. If we extend Sartre's thinking, then, to know we are being oppressed and to do nothing about it is similar to acting in the bad faith he identifies primarily with the escape into religion. We may relinquish our agency and comply with the demands of the oppressors, even convince ourselves that such compliance is in our long-term best interest, but we recognize at a far deeper level that by doing so we relinquish both our freedom and a significant portion of our humanity.

Individuals living in bad faith are driven by existential angst to drown themselves in the trivial, the social, the religious, and any other available ingredient that restores previous beliefs and undermines authentic analyses of one's circumstances. In spite of its psychologically comforting capacity, bad faith is an avoidance mechanism to escape personal responsibility and complicity in the choices and events that shape our lives. To "blame" capitalism for our woes or even recognize it as the cause, as Freire appreciates, is simply not good enough—it offers incomplete humanization. Conscientização demands more than recognition, it demands political action.

Those who live in bad faith seek refuge in the belief that they can insulate themselves from their circumstances by denying, distorting, or reconstructing experience to comport with some preexisting self or national concept. Perhaps we might try to convince ourselves that capitalism is the best of all possible worlds or that acts of false generosity are actually acts of selflessness. However, to live in bad faith is to deny our existential freedom, and the responsibility to ourselves and others such freedom entails.

Warnock (1970) maintains that Sartre's existentialism, similar to both Marx and Freire, is a philosophy based largely on moral outrage with the existing social structure and political inaction. Freire's philosophical synthesis was based on similar moral assumptions that place humans at the center of "being" and "existence." One of us has suggested elsewhere (Hyslop-Margison, 2003) that an existential analysis "encourages us to explore the authenticity of our values and beliefs, and provides

an ethic for action based on a fundamental respect for human dignity and freedom" (p. 67). Freire's existentialist assumptions asked humans to consider the legitimacy of their attitudes and values through a critical analysis of reality while recognizing their freedom and agency to transform their circumstances. He asks us to evaluate our circumstances authentically and to make choices that move our own lives and those of others in different and more moral directions.

In Sartre's view, a fundamental part of human existence is based on the freedom and autonomy to make choices, but not simply any choice will suffice. The quality of all human existence is tied directly to the choices that individual humans make in society and how these choices affect others. For example, our actions shape our being by defining who we are. Based on our actions, which include inaction, we begin to define ourselves and also determine opportunities for others. Our personal choices and actions reflect on society as well. In underscoring the importance of an existentialist ethic, Sartre (1957) argued, "We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all" (p. 37). Based on his view, then, choosing good is an essential element of the human condition since if we choose good for ourselves we must choose good for all humankind. But what is the "good?" In Sartre's view, and again closely matching the position of Freire, choosing "good" is an action that affords liberty to both the chooser and to others. Oppressors cannot choose oppression for others without choosing it for themselves.

Liberatory choice and action is "good" because rather than oppressing, manipulating, or coercing other people, it provides them with space for authenticity, choice, and actualization, or, in Freire's terminology, conscientização. Dignity exists for no one until all people within all situations are afforded dignity as well. One cannot rationally expect to be treated fairly unless such treatment is extended to the entire community of humankind. The oppressors or the oppressed cannot live in dignity while millions of people around them live in anguish and despair—the oppressors live in shame whether they realize and admit it or not. Our "good" choices, then, must not interfere or impede the actions, dignity, and authenticity of others. The choices made by the oppressors are fundamentally immoral ones because they interfere with the existential possibilities of the oppressed.

Freire clearly embraced Sartre's assertion that humans are "condemned to be free." Conscientização is, in many respects, the realization of one's existential possibilities to act upon the world in morally appropriate ways that respect the freedom of others. Both Sartre and Freire argued that liberation is not a destination but a continuous journey—our choices and the change they precipitate are continuous and the need for transformation and/or resistance against stultifying forces never ends. Freedom is a journey because no one ever becomes permanently liberated from potential oppression. The important aspect of living a liberated life is the right to seek alternatives, question one's existence, and perpetually pursue one's self-actualization.

It was actually through Marx that Freire first connected with existentialism, and especially phenomenology, an extension of existentialist philosophical assumptions: "phenomenology calls into question all presuppositions about the nature of its own activity, the object being investigated, and the method appropriate to this

kind of inquiry" (Kincheloe et al., 2000, p. 281). Phenomenology alerted Freire to the understanding that language is value-laden and inevitably transmits a particular worldview. Language is more than a simple means of communication; rather it is directly linked to culture. Freire incorporated this view into his liberation pedagogy; which might also be seen as a way of becoming aware of and transforming the dominant and oppressive culture through questioning the language it imposes on us.

Clearly, then, French existentialism and the phenomenological tradition it spawned in German philosophy became one of the primary instruments supporting Freire's pedagogical practice. Freire often quoted Sartre in criticizing oppression and traditional forms of education in their attempt to "mystify" reality and to separate us from a fuller understanding of our world, thus not allowing us to assert our free will in defining and shaping that world. From Freire's perspective, learners are historical subjects capable of transforming their own lived realities as they see them, as subjects who act upon the world, as opposed to objects who are acted upon by others. The objective of this pedagogical approach is for learners to form their identities against the structural definitions, labels, and hurdles they confront. Rather than becoming the objects of research and policy formation, then, they become the self-defining agents of societal change.

Like all philosophies, existentialism is not without its critics. Warnock (1970) maintains that,

> Despite the apparently endless freedom built into the nature of conscious things, they are in fact constrained in various directions. Each person has, as we have seen, his own 'facticity' which limits the possibilities open to him. (p. 113)

However, Warnock's criticism seemingly presupposes an individually fixed reality with concrete and insurmountable constraints. In Sartre's view such limits may pose hurdles to actions but they are never insurmountable to human will, decision making, or action. For example, the "facticity" of neoliberalism as individual lived reality, albeit a socially constructed one, is not in question—what is in question is whether we have the will to free ourselves from its overwhelming injustice and violence.

Summary

In this chapter we have traced Freire's indebtedness to Marx and Sartre. Although these two philosophers propose radically distinct approaches to conceptualizing reality, their shared outrage of capitalist oppression attracted Freire to both ideas. In the final analysis, these ideas actually mesh successfully as Freire combines the structural critique of Marxism, with the absolute agency of existentialism. However, the inclusion of liberation theology in Freire's philosophy discussed in Chapter 3 does run contrary to existentialist analyses of "bad faith" and Marxist concerns over "false consciousness." Generally, the indoctrination of any religious belief system, regardless of its intentions, is antithetical to the goals of agency and ideological unpacking central to Freire's position.

In the final chapter, we offer a comprehensive summary of Freire's work and major ideas, and explore his indebtedness to a range of philosophical traditions. We also argue that in spite of this indebtedness, his philosophy of education and social transformation is exceptionally original in its synthesis and application. We explore his overall contribution to education and celebrate the intellectual richness and innovation of his ideas.

Finally, we offer some examples of how Freire's ideas might be applied in a contemporary classroom as a bulwark against neoliberal exploitation. These examples do not reveal a "method" in the traditional sense but are designed to illustrate how problem posing might be pedagogically employed.

Chapter 5
Freire's Critical Pedagogy: Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

Given our modern understanding of language, literacy practices in education, as Freire understood and taught, cannot be viewed in isolation from the various social forces that lead to individual or group marginalization. In fact, discourse practices and the ideologies they forge are a central means by which social inequality is maintained. The critical education advocated by Freire is a crucial mechanism in the deconstruction of prevailing social discourses, an indispensable tool to eliminate wide-scale social inequality by exposing the deleterious impact of ideology on consciousness and social construction. Freire's work enhances our understanding and description of the world, and it is through his conceptual machinery that the transformation of unequal social relations may be effectively revealed. In this final chapter we highlight the implications of Freire's work for critical pedagogy. This closing discussion is intended to provide educators with the knowledge to dismantle the various inequities reproduced through public schools.

Freire's Critical Literacy

The prevailing practice of education perpetuates existing social relations by preparing disadvantaged students to fill lower strata vocations within the current job market framework. It dashes hopes and dreams of both disadvantaged students and their parents. It promotes the social status quo by limiting the opportunity for economically disadvantaged learners to increase their understanding of the world through a richer understanding of the contextual nature of language, and how language shapes our worldviews. The ostensibly noble objectives accompanying this conception of learning mask an ideological agenda designed to maintain a socioeconomic system that relegates many individuals to a life of economic hardship. In some cases this hardship reaches devastating proportions. But even where the effects may be more difficult to identify, functional learning approaches dehumanize students by robbing them of their right to reason, to speak, and to act.

Similar to other educational concepts, conceptions of literacy contain social theories or models of social order, social power, and social change. They promote

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theories of worker/employer and class relations, and imply how workers should behave and think in the global economy. Educating learners in functional literacy, with its reification of current structural conditions, promotes the social status quo by ignoring alternative discourses that offer alternative analyses. In the critical pedagogy developed by Freire, the existing social order is not presented as the inexorable consequence of history or human nature, but rather as an artifice constructed to protect powerful ideological interests. Pedagogical practices associated with critical pedagogy place the needs of the individual learner ahead of corporate political agendas, and encourage social reconstruction to achieve social justice.

We have suggested that Freire's work is arguably more relevant than ever before in the history of social development. In the present context of current global economic reform, the prevailing market economy practices are sustained by ideological forces that marginalize counter discourses while at the same time operate through public education to legitimize their own. The language myths accompanying the prevailing economic view are especially salient within functional literacy. They lend a distinctively delusionary objectivist slant to discussions about education generally, and literacy in particular. The value of contemporary education programs at all levels is almost exclusively judged on how well they meet labor market requirements. As workers and citizens, then, we simply inherit and interpret the world as a static entity, and adopt a servile approach to social interaction and labor market participation.

A more sophisticated understanding of language reveals a dynamic, complex process of communication that operates at least as much to shape social reality as it does simply to label it. A major hurdle for Freire's perspective on education is that much of the current research in the field refuses to consider the relevant historical, social, or cultural context of the subject under investigation. Indeed, the view that only empirical research is credible invokes a certain measure of closure on educational debate by limiting discussion on important moral or social considerations, normative assumptions lurking behind the research questions being asked. A rigid, positivist research approach to education encourages academics to research matters in a microscopic fashion—looking under the psychological lamp post as Egan (2002) puts it—in virtual isolation from social causal forces, individual context, or consequences. The idea that education should be emancipatory and humanizing is almost never the subject of contemporary academic research.

Adopting a more complex understanding of educational issues, Richard Paul, one of the leading theoreticians on critical thinking has attacked the academic tendency to research education issues apart from their social causes, rather than as one element in an interconnected network of competing ideas. He suggests that academic compartmentalization is itself contrary to the goals of education because it negatively impacts on our critical reasoning abilities:

> To become a reasoner or critical thinker requires skills of concrete synthesis which are as yet not fully developed. We will get little help from the academic world as presently structured with its strict compartmentalization. We need new skills in the art of totalizing experience rationally, as well as in the dialectical questioning of primary categorizations. (Paul, 1983, p. 20)

As we have illustrated in the earlier chapters Freire similarly condemns the inclination to categorize problems into separate realms of inquiry, a method ignoring the broader social or economic causes behind many of the more serious problems existing within education. The categorization of education into distinct disciplines isolates learning into fragmented bits of information and prevents students from understanding the connected web of ideology behind the social structure of opportunity. Kincheloe (1993) observes that,

> As the politicians mandate test-driven curricula, they create a new form of the cognitive illness. Finding its roots in modernist fragmentation, recent "excellence" reform has produced a "factoid syndrome" where students learn isolated bits and pieces of information for tests without concern for relationship between the facts or their application to the problems of the world. (1993, p. 30)

Postmodernism and Praxis Marxism

Quite clearly, many of Freire's insights into language and discourse emerge from the important understandings fostered by postmodern thought. Postmodernism has added much to our analysis of the social and natural world by challenging the Eurocentric assumptions of modernism. Kincheloe et al. (2000) cite the Manifesto of Beliefs, Purposes, and Programs as crafted by the Center for a Postmodern World:

> A post-Eurocentric view that the values and practices of the European tradition will no longer be assumed to be superior to those of other traditions or forcibly imposed upon others combined with a respect for the wisdom embedded in all cultures; a post scientific belief that while the natural sciences possess one important method of scientific investigation, there are also moral, religious and aesthetic institutions that contain important truths that must be given a central role in the development of worldviews and public policy; a post-disciplinary concept of research and scholarship with an ecologically independent view of the cosmos rather than the mechanistic perspective of a modern engineer controlling the universe; and finally, a post-nationalistic view in which the individualism of nationalism is transcended and replaced by a planetary consciousness that is concerned about the welfare of the earth first and foremost. (p. 25)

Although postmodernism provides a visionary, critical, insightful approach to understanding the dynamics of language, and emphasizes the importance of subjective experience, it has been unfortunately unable to turn this criticism into concrete political action. There is a certain measure of political paralysis in postmodernism. The epistemic and normative uncertainty on which the theory is based lacks the necessary pillars to construct a moral foundation to advance any coherent argument for social justice or economic equality.

In spite of its various academic contributions, postmodern criticism engenders a certain political inertia rather than generating praxis and is, therefore, inadequate to achieve Freirean objectives. Michael Apple (1990), for example, explains the immobilizing impact of postmodern theory on education research and underlines the need for a more grounded critique of education:

> Can we as educators honestly cope with the probability that certainty will not be forthcoming, that many of our answers and our actions will be situational and filled with ambiguity?

> With this in mind, how do we commit ourselves to action? . . . our very commitment to rationality in the widest sense of the term requires us to begin the dialectic of critical understanding that will be part of the political praxis. (p. 166)

If we are to advance the cause of social justice and human equality, then we require a commitment to concrete moral values, an understanding that precipitated Freire's attachment to the essentialist Aristotelian notions of humanization.

Indeed, given the economic basis for functional literacy and its ideological counterparts, Marxist analytical techniques offered Freire powerful insights into social indoctrination and marginalization. They are socially encompassing, politically emancipating, and thoroughly critical in their approach. Freire's employment of Marxist style criticism is capable of revealing the economic interests that pervade education practices in contemporary Western societies. As David Livingstone (1983) argues, Marx's view that social practices such as education have a material basis is one of enduring relevance, a point clearly recognized and employed by Freire in his understanding of education: "Marx's mature work has been of such enduring relevance because its analysis does not depend on speculative philosophical concepts but on real historical abstractions regarding the material production of society" (p. 24).

The key to understanding the basis of contemporary education policy is appreciating the influence hegemonic material forces, e.g., corporate economic interests, exact on current education practices. Many of Paulo Freire's ideas are directly derived from this understanding because they echo the concepts of neo-Marxist analyses of education. Freire's work in literacy in particular accepts Marx's view that unequal relationships in society are mirrored in the world of education as an act of social reproduction.

In this period of neoliberal capitalism when economic interests exert such tremendous pressure on public education, Marxist criticism strikes a countervailing blow against the domesticating market economy ideological forces. Apple similarly views Marxist analytical techniques as more appropriate for critiquing contemporary education than postmodern approaches: "Critical questions are generated out of a tradition of neo-Marxist argumentation, a tradition which seems to me to offer the most cogent framework for organizing one's thinking and action about education" (Apple, 1990, p. 1).

Any coherent argument advocating major social change must also provide a moral foundation to justify that transformation. Freire chose neo-Marxist and/or Praxis Marxist analytical techniques because they provide a moral framework for an attack on functional education and its ideological implications. If there is one central tenet of Praxis Marxism clearly reflected in Freire's work it is this: Marxism is preeminently a body of thought which is uncompromising in its rejection of all forms of human alienation, exploitation, oppression, and injustice, regardless of the type of society—bourgeois or socialist—in which these phenomena occur.

Neo-Marxism and Praxis Marxism provide a critical approach that places human agency at the forefront of their analysis rather than focusing on the dialectical materialism of orthodox Marxism. Although the early Marx doggedly maintained that

his philosophy was amoral, it is the moral aspect of Marxism that is perhaps its most important and lasting legacy to the world. Indeed, Freire's work may have drifted slightly from Marx's specific predictions, but the former shared his commitment to identifying, explaining, and criticizing hierarchies of dominance and subordination. While Freire advocated socialism, he certainly did not view it as the end of history and understood the importance of perpetual critique and social revision.

Another central element of Marxist criticism adopted by Freire is the fundamental importance placed on transforming consciousness among disadvantaged individuals to provide them with the incentive to improve their lives. The transformation of consciousness or, as Paulo Freire terms it, conscientização, is the initial intellectual shift that critical education seeks to inspire. It is only after this change in individual consciousness, through increased contextual awareness and understanding how that context shapes identity, that liberation through praxis, or reflective action, can occur. Similar to Freire's view, then, Praxis Marxism considers consciousness as both an expression of the material world and, when altered, a mechanism for social transformation. As Madan Sarap (1978) observes, "The transformation of consciousness is vital in Marxism and is an inseparable part of structural change" (p. 192).

The objective of Freirean pedagogy, like that in the Praxis Marxism described by Sarap, is to transform consciousness through an increased awareness of how language enables and circumscribes individual thoughts and social interaction. Much of Freire's most important work is devoted to examining the consequences of denying humans the self-actualizing rewards of intellectual and esoteric pursuits. Indeed, the view that human oppression and alienation necessarily follow from capitalist relations is the central idea supporting both the ontological and moral pillars of Freire's philosophy.

By reducing learners to the level of human resource, the instrumental education dominating public schools alienates them from their human character by limiting the expression of their rationality, creativity, and denying their existential engagement with the world. Freire describes this alienation as follows:

> Alienation can occur when man [sic] is separated from his activity, his own products, from his fellow-men and his species. In so many aspects of education the potential inherent in individuals is neglected and the person thought of as a commodity on the market. That is to say, 'potential' is regarded only in terms of usefulness to social needs; instead of being developed, it is exploited. (Freire, 2000, p. 135)

Conceptions of education that fail to embrace humankind's rational requirements—the need for reflective action—in favor of instrumental preparation for work or society as presently designed denies humanization. Freire's observations demand that public education treat students not as objects in a preparatory exercise but as subjects in a dialogue about the issues that affect their lives. This requires a leveling of the relationship between teachers and students that enables a free exchange of the beliefs, knowledge, and experiences everyone brings into the classroom context.

Although current public education may, optimistically evaluated, prepare learners for specific or general occupational roles, in isolation from aesthetic and humanistic educational practices, it inevitably alienates them from their species character as observed by Freire's philosophy. The interaction between the base and superstructure ensure the protection of privilege and class reproduction within capitalist society:

> The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the material dominant force in society is at the same time its dominant intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it. (Marx cited in Williams, 1983, p. 50)

Instrumental learning, often delivered in the form of functional literacy instruction, operates as ideology by promoting the prevailing socioeconomic structure, by providing a minimally skilled workforce and by ensuring the existence of a minimally literate class guaranteed to maintain class divisions. Educational institutions such as public schools, and increasingly universities, are especially vulnerable to ideology because they are viewed by the hegemonic corporate forces as the primary and most effective means for ideological indoctrination. As an objective in Freire's philosophy of education, critical education stands in dialectical opposition to indoctrination by challenging the moral and political legitimacy of the economic base controlling both public schooling and, the very material foundation from which the definitions and functions of education systems are derived.

Threats to Democratic Learning

Perhaps the most deleterious consequence of the current emphasis on instrumental learning in schools and universities is that it eliminates many of the primary ends of education in a democratic society. Instrumental learning pushes to the side the social and cultural and ethical goals of education in a free and intellectually vibrant milieu. A central function of education within a truly democratic context is the perpetual questioning of the status quo. Instead, it creates a cynical and deterministic view of students sitting in our classrooms as objectified human capital being prepared for globalization.

The naturalization of neoliberal ideology is widely evident in a range of contemporary curricula that typically describe present circumstances to students in terms that suggest either their inevitability or their desirability. Neoliberal ideology removes the economic sphere from moral or social discussion by portraying these latter realms of discourse as dependent on the former. All other spheres of life are correspondingly designed to address the needs of the marketplace and any interference with market logic becomes unthinkable let alone possible. Habermas (1996) suggests that we are witnessing the complete invasion of what he describes as the *life world* by the creation of false needs and the rapid decline of public spaces.

The life world for Habermas consists of those fundamental human experiences and interactions that generate a sense of inner peace or individual well-being and provides the necessary community space for democratic discussion.

Public education has not escaped the privatization consistent with neoliberal policies as evidenced by the growth of the school choice movement in the US. Adopting an unbridled faith in competition and micro-level accountability as the means to correct all possible social and economic ills, neoliberal advocates demand that schools and teachers be held responsible for student academic fortunes through the development of standardized testing. As an ideological mechanism, these tests effectively mask the structural causes of academic underachievement and unemployment by viewing educational problems as individual failures. With complete disregard for resource inequity, economic disparity, and other structural impediments to academic achievement, the belief developed that schools could be improved by creating a parallel school system to compete with the public variety.

In spite of their traditional role as the gatekeepers of intellectual freedom, universities have not escaped the drift toward human capital preparation and other instrumental demands of the marketplace. Faced with huge public financing reductions, universities are increasingly focused on technical training rather than on creating informed and engaged democratic citizens. Concordia University, for example, is marketed under the slogan "real education for the real world," a mantra that effectively reduces learning to social efficiency precepts by implying there is a real social world beyond that shaped by human agency and decision making.

In the US and Canada a significant number of research chairs are entirely corporate sponsored with the attending obligation to direct research agendas toward studies that pay corporate dividends. Increasingly, universities view their relationship with students within a business model framework with students often described as clients or customers of the university rather than as members of a scholarly community with rights and responsibilities to share in and shape community life. A recent article appearing in a University of Toronto publication extolled that institution's new focus on students as "customers" who deserved good service as a smart move not for delivering quality education but for nurturing long term alumni loyalty— and, of course, contributions. This commodification of education not only appears in marketing and customer service campaigns directed at students, parents, and alumni, but in an increasing focus on universities as providers of commodities (under the guise of credentials) rather than education.

The reduction of public funding for universities creates intense competition between faculty for available private and public grants. The ability to attract funding into the university is now typically viewed as a fundamental tenure requirement. The research funded by these grants often poses little challenge to the neoliberal structure because it either neglects society as a primary unit of analysis or manifestly embraces prevailing human capital objectives. The focus of this research is often grounded far more in the idea of social and economic utility than in fostering democratic critique. The idea that a university experience is about intellectual growth, social debate, and democratic dialogue has been largely usurped by the neoliberal objectives of customer service, credentializing, technical training, and instrumental

learning. In the current university milieu, faculty members are often reduced from their democratic role of social critics to that of entrepreneurial researchers or clerical proletariat labor.

An education system designed to respond to the needs of the marketplace predictably appears radically different from one focused on preparing students for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the US, for example, does not include a single reference to either democracy or democratic citizenship. The NCLB Act advances neoliberal assumptions through its advocacy of instrumental research practices that ensure learning programs are based on empirical research drawing on observation and experiment. By focusing on scientism the social structure of opportunity as a unit of research analysis is undermined, as are the structural changes such research might precipitate.

Neoliberal culture is naturalized to students in public and higher education as an unchangeable social reality rather than critiqued as an ideological movement imposed by special corporate interests on citizens of industrialized democratic societies. Outside the strictures of the global market, education in the neoliberal order conveys to students there are simply no longer any meaningful choices to be made. Throughout contemporary education curricula, and in a variety of ideologically manipulative ways, students are expected to prepare for an uncertain occupational future and are discursively convinced that such conditions are beyond the scope of their own political agency. Pedagogical tools of social critique such as critical thinking, lifelong learning, and literacy are all influenced by the neoliberal shift toward instrumental instruction. As a result, schools fail to prepare students as democratic citizens who possess the necessary understanding and dispositions to decide politically between various social possibilities. Instead, students are portrayed as mere objects in history and inculcated with a consumer driven worldview devoid of imagination, hope, or alternative social visions.

In *Education at* a *Glance,* the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), one of the most influential international policy development agencies in education, suggests that,

> A well-educated and literate workforce yields national comparative [competitive] advantage and harnesses forces to counteract polarization and social seclusion. Today, adults need a high level of literacy to function well. (OECD, 1996, p. 31)

Unfortunately, the kind of "functioning" referred to by the OECD, of course, relates entirely to employability—often limited in both economic and ontological return—and national economic productivity. A qualified labor force, social inclusion, and political stability are prerequisite conditions for corporate sustainability rather than necessary characteristics of an egalitarian society such as that envisioned by Freire. Sadly typical of the current focus in public education, learning is primarily, if indeed not entirely, viewed as a vehicle to strengthen economic performance indicators and indexes of economic growth. Kincheloe (1993) makes a similar observation by suggesting that, "Like other aspects of the postmodern landscape, thinking has been commodified—its values measured only in terms of the

logic of capital. The moral and ethical dimensions of thinking in this context have grown increasingly irrelevant" (p. 55).

OECD research on education is primarily carried out by the Center of Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). For over 30 years CERI has actively promoted education research and, during that period, developed numerous projects in various OECD countries, all with a human capital emphasis. CERI explores the various links between research, policy, innovation, and practice in education, and explains how these areas impact on economic performance. The impact of education practices on human ontology or social justice, on the other hand, is completely ignored as if humans are mere labor market objects to manipulate for the benefit of international corporations.

CERI research is carried out by a politically influential staff that includes educators, researchers, and policy makers. Following CERI's advise to the OECD, the parent organization suggests policy changes to member countries in order to strengthen their economic performance through "improved" educational practices. Inevitably, these improvements target the relationship between education and work, and offer practices to strengthen human capital preparation. CERI (1998) formulated six major goals to direct its education policy recommendations that highlight the organization's economic objectives and its neglect of democratic objectives. These objectives also highlight the chasm between the ontological and moral objectives at the heart of Freire's philosophy of education:

- Develop and analyze education statistics and indicators.
- Identify key features of schooling for tomorrow.
- Understand the role of R&D in education, learning economies, and knowledge.
- Evaluate significant innovations of what works.
- Analyze educational and other innovative strategies for social inclusion.
- Develop new dissemination strategies.

Perhaps the last of these six objectives best reveals the OECD's perspective on both education and knowledge, and the learning philosophy behind functional literacy instruction and instrumental education. Whereas Freire views learning and knowledge as a negotiated product generated between teachers and students engaged in dialogue, the OECD's portrayal of "knowledge" is presented as objective and absolute, and derived entirely from the worldview of those controlling its "dissemination." If superior "dissemination strategies" are discovered, then from the instrumental learning perspective "education" is improved. Unfortunately, the individual aspirations, ontological requirements, or existential aspirations of individual learners are simply not considered relevant within the corporate-dominated context.

The functional philosophy of education behind this type of corporate-driven educational agenda reflects the perceived labor market needs of the global economy. The role of the learner is entirely reduced to that of an object acted upon by the imposed will of more powerful stakeholders. Indeed, the concept of "learning for knowledge economies," a popular slogan in contemporary education reveals itself as more than a mere metaphor with manipulative capacity. Education at all levels

increasingly links learning to the perceived economic needs of the labor market. The "student" becomes a commodity whose future is predetermined by the needs of others.

As Freire's philosophy of education suggests, permitting the market place to determine educational objectives has far-reaching, negative consequences for education practices and for democracy. The global marketplace maintains that market practices rather than fundamental student needs required for humanization provide the most effective means to allocate goods and services, i.e., education, in society. The prevailing corporate discourse maintains that the public economic interest is best served through the interplay of individuals competing in the marketplace, a view now fully extended into the field of education. The solution to so-called public school failure becomes the creation of charter schools and vouchers, both driven by the misconception that education, like other market-driven services, is strengthened by competition. These alternative school movements are also ideological to the extent they blame public schools for student failure and remove the focus from the social structure of academic opportunity.

Within the framework described above, education responds to the demands of the marketplace in a fashion similar to other market-driven goods and services. If a given ability, quality, or skill is not required by the market place then its value is reduced accordingly. The challenges, then, to introducing a Freirean democratic approach to public education are daunting within a milieu where the value of learning is entirely related to the potential for economic return. The corporate approach to learning undermines the possibility for Freirean education in a variety of ways. In the new educational market place, yield, output, quantity, and turnover overshadow the humanistic education objectives of political agency, creating a moral society, and humanization. Aesthetic and humanistic educational ideas such as art, beauty, harmony, and, especially, conscientização are simply unable to compete because they offer no direct ideological, epistemic, or economic benefit to the corporate captains of society.

Within the contemporary market context, even with its rapidly fading claims to global success, education is not viewed as a means for self-expression, political activism, or conscientização. Neither is it considered an important instrument to develop even modest social understanding, appreciate the importance of moral responsibility, or to heighten student aesthetic, critical, and creative sensibilities. In a neoliberal market system, quality education is redefined in strict accordance with market economy values.

The purpose of education has become starkly utilitarian and its "quality" is defined and assessed accordingly. This troubling trend has marked discussions about education for decades. For example, at a 1990 Conference Board of Canada gathering, "Reaching for Success: Business and Education Working Together," the corporate view on education in Canada that undercuts the moral and political objectives of Freirean pedagogy was articulated:

> Business leaders attending the conference made it clear they recognize that helping to improve the education system is the key to national prosperity and corporate success in the

> future . . . Every level of Canada's education system must be enhanced to meet our national needs. (Taylor, p. 24)

This perspective on learning not only illustrates an impoverished view of education antithetical to Freire's pedagogy, but also offers important insight into the contemporary moral and ontological failings in business-driven conceptions of schooling. These narrow views on education are deeply destructive of education philosophies such as Freire's that embrace humanistic political, social, and moral values.

The corporate desire to exercise hegemonic control over education generally and literacy education in particular as a means to control social consciousness is not a new phenomenon within industrialized countries. Freire understood this feature of literacy education especially well and much of his own pedagogical work, as we have pointed out, involved attempts to overturn it. As early as the 1820s, working class leaders, understanding the implications of literacy for class-consciousness and democratic participation, resisted literacy approaches in schools similar to the one currently being advocated by mainstream schooling.

In Critical Literacy Subverted: Early Public Schools, Individualism, and the Ideal of Reading, Phyllis Ryder (1995) points out that the New York Working Man's Party believed "all children [were] entitled to an equal Education: all adults, to equal property, all mankind, to equal privileges" (p. 3). To promote these values the labor-oriented and socialist party actively campaigned against domesticating models of literacy education. According to Ryder, "the early school system reinforced values of punctuality, and encouraged workers to accept their lot, if not happily, at least submissively" (Ryder, 1995, p. 9).

In *Ideology and the State*, one of the premier theorists in the study of ideological manipulation, Louis Althusser (1973), argues that within contemporary society, education, filling the role previously played by the church, is now the primary state apparatus for promoting hegemonic ideology:

> It [the education system] takes children from every class at infant school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most vulnerable, squeezed between the family state apparatus and the educational apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of "know how" wrapped in ruling ideology. (p. 29)

A significant part of Freire's pedagogical project focuses on exposing how the power relations referred to by Althusser are reproduced through public schooling. Kincheloe et al. (2000) provide an exceptionally lucid description of how this relationship between ideology and power operates:

> The concept of ideology finds its grounding in this traditional progressive concern with oppression and its accompanying power disparity. Applying the concept of ideology, we can begin to understand how powerful groups shape our consciousness for their own purposes. (p. 409)

By promoting free-market ideology within schools and universities, corporations insulate themselves from social criticism. The corporate worldview is validated either openly or tacitly by the very institutions responsible for fostering the advanced learning and social critique necessary for democratic citizenship.

Indeed, the connection between prevailing policy trends in education and ideology is increasingly evident as corporate forces gain a stranglehold on the higher education systems within OECD countries. In his critical introduction to Roger Dale's *The State and Education Policy,* Michael Apple describes some of the ways current public education practices undermine the conscientização Freire situates as the objective of education:

> The movement by governments to raise standards and mandate curricular goals and knowledge, thereby centralizing at a government level the control of teaching and curricula . . . the growing pressure to make the needs of business and industry into the primary goals of the education system. (Apple cited in Dale, 1989, p. 5)

In a similar critique of contemporary education practices, Ellis (1998) exposes the current emphasis on so-called outcome-based curricula as a means of protecting corporate interests from social criticism. Ellis argues that a "fill in the blanks" approach to learning results in the acquisition of virtually useless facts, skills, and figures while, at the same time, it advances the instrumental corporate agenda. He correctly suggests that an abstracted outcome-based curriculum, a format that is even pervading higher education, leads to academic fragmentation, a divide and conquer mechanism to prevent collusion against the dominant social forces.

The type of social understanding Freire advocates is also eroded by the naturalization of current socioeconomic conditions in contemporary curriculum imperatives. On a global level, market forces and the philosophy behind them dictate government policy on everything from health care to education. For example, at the 1998 spring convocation at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John, Rev. Phillip J. Lee, a Presbyterian minister and recipient of an honorary doctorate degree from the University of New Brunswick, warned graduates about the pervasiveness of corporate ideology and its negative impact on social justice. Borrowing a phrase from Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* he correctly explained to graduates how the time is out of joint:

> You and I, we are told, we have no freedom. Because we are told day after day by a relentless barrage of information, outside of those strictures of the global market place, there are no longer any choices to be made. So, for example, we would like to have the best public school system possible but we are told we can't afford it. We would like to have a public health care program second to none but we are told the global market will not allow it. When will a teacher or prophet in our day have the courage to say, 'But wait, human beings were not made to serve the economic system. An economic system was made to serve human beings'. (Allen, 1998, A1)

Clearly, these insightful words might have been expressed by Paulo Freire himself as a call to accept our social and democratic responsibilities. As Freire argued, we are equipped with agency. We have the capacity to transform the multitude of injustices we continue to suffer at the hands of corporate elites. Education, as an enlightening and transformative enterprise, can help us achieve that objective.

Education for Conscientização

An instrumental approach to education assumes that good teaching practices are simply a matter of developing superior techniques to disseminate a particular form of knowledge imposed by those outside the immediate realm of learning. It emphasizes competency-based education where learning is primarily a matter of detached "skill" mastery. These skills are, of course, defined in advance by education "experts," and are presented as being universally positive outcomes independent of context. A conception of education that has as its primary objective the preparation of individuals for existing social roles offers a means to an end approach in education that undercuts education as an expansive and existential experience.

The focus of instrumental learning is on students uncritically encoding specific information deemed as knowledge and/or important by others without considering the context of that information and posing a range of questions about whose interests are ultimately served. For example, in functional literacy instruction no consideration is given to the existential possibilities, humanization, aspirations, or ontology of learners. Lankshear (1993) explains that learners are objectified in functional literacy education as a means to someone else's end:

> Functional literacy reduces persons to the status of mere objects and means, rather than confirming and exalting them as ends in themselves. It aims to equip illiterate adults with just those skills and knowledge – no more – which ensure competence to function at the lowest levels of mechanical performance, as workers and citizens in a print dominated society. (p. 91)

Functional literacy has distinct advantages for corporate interests while undermining the depth of individual democratic understanding. Most functionally literate people are able to meet the minimum occupational requirements of social and labor market expectations. Without critical literacy, however, these same individuals may lack the knowledge and intellectual dispositions to appreciate the ancillary effects of the literacy they possess.

If learners are unable or unwilling to question the epistemological basis or source of the "knowledge" they acquire through education, or pose questions about whose interests the knowledge or information best serves, as Freire (2000) suggests, they are likely to become domesticated into the worldview of those dictating education policy. As we pointed out in the previous section, this turns educational agendas entirely over to corporate-dominated interests. In functional literacy instruction, the questions of what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge matters are left unexamined because they undermine the assumed objectivity of the provided information. Indeed, the collateral impact of functional literacy instruction is more than simply providing learners with a level of literacy that allows for social functioning. It systematically indoctrinates marginally literate individuals into established market economy practices, and promotes existing social values such as consumerism and corporatism by presenting learners with a single worldview. This is perhaps the primary trap that critical teachers following Freire's teachings must protect their

students from falling into—this is precisely what he meant by learning to read both the word and the world.

Within the current economic and labor market milieu of corporate downsizing and relocation, a situation only worsened during the present crisis when untold numbers of workers continue to lose their jobs, meaningful job creation and the reduction of unemployment levels are not really social or political priorities. As a result, the best that functionally literate workers can achieve within this environment is the displacement of other vulnerable workers from lower strata vocations such as those in the retail or service sectors.

As Freire (1998a) explained when education was identified to him as the ideal means to lower unemployment, "Merely teaching men to read and write does not work miracles; if there are not enough jobs for men able to work, teaching more men to read and write will not create them." (p. 401). However, blaming high rates of unemployment and economic disparity on low literacy and education levels among workers does have the ideological advantage of removing the focus from the real corporate-driven structural causes of unemployment in neoliberal market economies. The expectation that education can solve the most recent financial disaster caused by capitalism has become standard educational discourse rather than demanding the corporations bailed out with public funds rehire workers when their businesses are revitalized.

Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) write of an aggressive ideological lobby actively operating to protect this class-stratifying tradition in our neoliberal market-driven consumer economy society:

> Functionalist arguments frequently mounted by leaders of business and industry, and therefore also by congressional panels and government commissions, leaven a rhetoric of technological progressivism with a mixture of fear and patriotism in order to defend a social program that maintains managerial classes – whose members are far more than just functionally literate – in their customary place at the top of the social pyramid, while outfitting workers with the reading and writing skills that have lately supplanted the tool-press, hammer-and-nail, smelting, and welding skills of a now outmoded age. (p. 19)

As Freire's analysis of banking education suggests, and Marxist critique predicts, workers, in part, through functional literacy training, are streamed into their traditional role of social and economic subservience to hegemonic corporate interests. Training as many workers as possible in functional literacy or instrumental skills not only provides corporations with potentially cheap sources of labor in the global economy, it prevents workers from considering the contextual causes of their circumstances and possible social alternatives to market economy exploitation.

If education is restricted to providing learners with a superficial understanding and utilization of information, economically oppressed learners as future citizens and workers lack the literacy knowledge and understanding to engage in a meaningful social critique. They therefore represent little or no threat politically to the dominant social order. Limiting economically disadvantaged learners to functional literacy and instrumental education prevents them from obtaining the knowledge and understanding necessary to challenge the corporate supply and

demand discourse that situates students and workers as a commodity to be bought and sold as cheaply as possible in the global market place.

Ironically, the neoliberal order has adopted the historical materialism of classical Marxism. There is, we are told, an economic system that operates like a force of nature. You and I cannot argue with the system anymore than we can argue with the inexorable laws of gravity. There is a bottom line. There is the law of supply and demand. There are the necessities of marketing and consumption. There is an acceptable employment level and an acceptable inflation level. All of these circumstances must be accepted and our role is simply one of adaptation to all of these "inevitable" conditions.

In banking education the goal is to train and indoctrinate rather than educate, and the role of the student is limited to conforming and adapting to existing social circumstances. Instead of teaching learners how to dialectically engage the world as Freire proposes, banking education operates to naturalize social reality, and domesticates students into passively following external instructions and directions. As Lankshear (1993) points out there is no suggestion in instrumental education of students leading, commanding, mastering, or controlling the direction of society. There is only the expectation or demand for passive compliance.

When limited to banking education, learners are estranged from the world of decisions, policies, strategies, and developmental plans. They are habituated to passivity. If learners are mere recipients of knowledge—the objects as opposed to subjects of the learning experience—and they choose to accept this role (or perhaps more correctly manipulated to accept such a role), then they merely utilize the provided information. They learn through implication that decisions are made by more knowledgeable and intelligent others, and their role is simply to follow the instructions dictated to them by these individuals. They lose their subjectivity as agents and are dehumanized in the process.

Dehumanizing Elements of Banking Education

The most dehumanizing aspect of banking education is its implication that humans are simply an organic commodity to exploit within the market economy context of supply and demand. Although humans, as Freire convincingly argues, are clearly distinct from primary resources like coal and aluminum, the corporate discourse that speaks about the "reserve employment pool" reduces humans to precisely that same inhuman level. Speaking of students and workers in this fashion is ideologically effective, however, as it desensitizes society to the real human pain, suffering, and hardship associated with current neoliberal market practices. When unemployment is reduced to an economic statistic, the dehumanization it causes is swept away as socially irrelevant. The most troubling moral aspect of the banking education discourse and the functional literacy it entails, then, is that it reduces persons to the status of mere objects and means, rather than considering and exalting them as ends in themselves.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire, supporting observations made by Marx on worker alienation in capitalist societies, condemns the dehumanizing impact free market societies have on workers as a result of the latter's objectification. With the existential need for transforming self and society suppressed, individuals become alienated from their ontological nature and, at least on one level, become the victims of violence:

> If men, as historical beings necessarily engaged with other men in a movement of inquiry, did not control that movement, it would be (and is) a violation of men's humanity. Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate men from their own decision-making is to change them into objects. (2000, p. 73)

Denying learners a reasonable opportunity to engage in informed inquiry and subsequent action prevents their humanization because, as Freire contends, humans are by nature thinking, acting, and political beings. As we pointed out in Chapter 4, existentialism, with its absolute freedom of choice is a foundational component in Freire's educational philosophy. To eliminate the opportunity to choose is an affront to existential freedom and to humanization.

Freire fully appreciates that for critical inquiry and reflective action to occur, learners not only require the democratic right to criticize and participate politically, they must also possess the necessary intellectual skills to make informed choices and effective political challenges. As a result of banking education's impact learners schooled in this fashion are ill-equipped to understand the ways that ideology influences their individual consciousness and social perspective. Thus, their freedom to think and act autonomously in the truest sense of the word may be significantly reduced. Their world is limited to what they are told by others and knowledge becomes something generated and owned by more powerful others who dictate the terms of lived experience.

One central objective in Freire's pedagogy is the protection of student autonomy. An autonomous person enjoys the political freedom to hold and act upon her/his beliefs within certain limits prescribed by law. Although a reasonable degree of freedom from external constraints affords a necessary condition for autonomy, it does not supply a sufficient condition. A person may be politically free to hold a belief without possessing the necessary knowledge or critical dispositions required to formulate that idea autonomously (Hyslop-Margison, 2005). Freire's pedagogy attempts to free learners from the various ideological constraints that limit the capacity to think and act independent of hegemonic norms and values.

Freire was not alone in understanding the immorality of treating other individuals entirely as a means to an end. As we pointed out in Chapter 4, the existentialist ethic developed by Sartre requires consideration of the existential aspirations of others. In the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals,* Immanuel Kant, perhaps the preeminent moral philosopher in the history of Western thinking, emphasized the fundamental ethical importance of never treating any human being simply as a means to an end: "Man, however, is not a thing and hence is not something to be used merely as a means; he must in all his actions always be regarded as an end

in himself" (Kant, 1993, p. 36). Duties of social justice, respecting in practice the rights of others, or the duty not to violate the dignity of persons as rational agents are, according to Kant, strict moral maxims because they allow for no exceptions regardless of intentions or circumstances.

If we extend Kant's view to banking education, then, this form of learning obviously threatens the dignity and humanity of other human beings. Freire (2000), once again demonstrating his philosophical acumen, extends Kant's thinking beyond the abstract by arguing that humanization must be found within the process of learning and not merely in intentions or outcomes: "To affirm that men are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce" (p. 35).

Clearly suggesting the influence he exerted on Sartre's existential ethic, Kant argues that because we intuitively regard our own existence as an end in itself—presumably the owners of corporations see themselves in this fashion—the same consideration must be extended to others. There is no rational ground for expecting others to treat us as an end in ourselves, for example, if we are not prepared to extend the same treatment to others. The universality of ethical action is built into Kant's idea of morality, as moral acts are categorical rather than situational, and based on an appeal to a universal understanding of rationality, the latter also a centerpiece of Freirean philosophy.

To analyze contemporary education from the Kantian perspective, banking education and functional literacy instruction furnish students with barely enough skills and knowledge to operate at the lowest levels of sheer mechanical performance. In the process, learners and workers are exploited as human capital to serve the material ends of corporations. As Freire explains, any form of exploitation or education that limits human existential possibilities interferes with humanization and is therefore fundamentally immoral:

> Any situation in which A actively exploits B or hinders the pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man's ontoIogica1 and historical vocation to be more fully human. (Freire, 2000, p. 40)

Banking Education and Worker Alienation

The dehumanization that results from the kind of work that banking education prepares a person for is an important concern in neo-Marxist critiques of capitalism and Freire's philosophy of education. According to Marx, humans see their own reflection in the products they produce, the ideas they create, and the activities they pursue. The species character of human beings is free, creative, and defined by consciously directed activity. When denied the vocational opportunity to imagine, create, and interact with the world as an active subject, humans are alienated from their species character.

The work performed by functionally literate humans schooled in the banking tradition within contemporary society is often intellectually unchallenging and

repetitive, lacking a product created or completed by the worker. In the so-called information age, work such as data processing is external to and not part of or generated by the creative nature of the worker. The majority of contemporary jobs—including those in academics—are increasingly subject to external directives and reduce workers to a means to someone else's end. Thus, workers—think of teachers as one example—become estranged from their work on two counts: first they are denied a creative act of self-expression; and, second, they are alienated, or removed, from the product of their work. Teachers are typically portrayed as deliverers of information and increasingly view themselves in that fashion. The relationships with students become reduced to technical terms since education is merely a conduit to the "real world" objective of the labor market.

Freirean pedagogy prepares workers to redefine and reclaim work to promote the spiritual and humanistic components of vocational experience. Contrary to the agency so fundamental to Freirean objectives, the type of work that banking education prepares one for is seldom voluntary, but is imposed on workers as a prerequisite for economic survival. It is not chosen in an existential sense but rather imposed as a form of servitude. This type of imposed labor inevitably generates feelings of anxiousness and disempowerment in workers for a nominal material return. As a consequence,

> Man (sic) is alienated not only from the products of his labor but also from himself through the process of production. The nature of labor's productive activity results in man's self-alienation – he has a feeling of misery instead of well-being; rather than fulfilling himself, he must deny himself. (Stumpf, 1989, p. 441)

Within a banking education framework, people are not encouraged to develop their rational, imaginative, or creative capabilities. Instead, they are rationally debased as mere human commodity and forced to sell their labor at bargain basement prices.

Praxis in Freirean Pedagogy

Reflecting the humanist elements of Aristotelian essentialism we discussed earlier in the text, Freire focuses on the ontological needs of persons to become fully human through thought and action. The critical education he advocates is fundamental to self-actualization because it helps economically disadvantaged learners appreciate the causal structural factors creating their situatedness, and helps them understand how discourse and the social structure of opportunity operate to perpetuate oppression. It also helps learners recognize that they have the ability, through praxis, to transform their circumstances. As Freire (2000) suggests,

> I shall start by reaffirming that men, as beings of praxis, differ from animals which are beings of pure activity. Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, men emerge from the world, objectify it and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labor. (p. 119)

Although one might take legitimate exception with Freire's depiction of animals, his general point remains crucial in understanding his pedagogy. As humans, and

consistent with the existentialist analysis we provided in Chapter 4, we possess a consciousness distinguishing us from other living things. We are not merely aware in the sense that we are sentient beings—all higher order animals obviously possess this characteristic. Rather, human consciousness is able to grasp the historical context of the circumstances in which it is situated. We recognize our distinctiveness from the objective world we encounter, and realize at least potentially that we can reconstruct that world in a variety of ways through action. The recognition of our orientation to the world, and our interaction with it, forms the basis for emancipated human consciousness, praxis, and personal freedom. Freire (2000) suggests that, "At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 52).

Praxis is a concept first employed by Aristotle, later by Marx, and also used extensively by Freire in his critical pedagogy. At its most basic level the term describes thought and action comprising the ethical and political life of humankind. As beings conscious of ourselves and of our ability to influence the world, we also understand ourselves and our life project as incomplete. We understand that we have lived a different life in the past from the one we are now living, and potentially, through personal and/or sociopolitical change, we can live a different life in the future. We are not trapped in history. We enjoy the capacity to create or make history by acting in the world. As the Freirean pedagogical objective, conscientização is intended to promote the recognition that personal and social change is possible by altering the ways we understand, act politically in and upon the world. It recognizes humans as historical beings who, through reflection and action, transform their social circumstances in progressive sorts of ways. A Freirean learning experience educates learners that humans exist within culturally constructed contexts that are altered by consciously directed action:

> The characteristics that make humans what they are include their openness to engagement in the world and their abilities to gain objective distance from the world, to transcend the world, to engage in critical reflection upon the world, to give meaning to the world, and to create history and culture. (Elias, 1994, p. 52)

Students develop an understanding, then, that neoliberal social and economic conditions, and the instrumental learning practices they espouse, are not the inevitable result of history, but rather the consequence of consciously directed action. They realize that oppression is an historical act that can be transcended through further action.

Functional Literacy as False Generosity and Banking Education

We have discussed at several points throughout the text the deleterious impact that functional literacy and instrumental learning may exact on learners. Functional literacy instruction is important because it represents the primary education outcome Freire sought to overturn. In this section we elaborate on the seriousness of this threat to student understanding of the world, their agency and praxis, in sum, all of the key components of conscientização.

The prevailing conception of literacy instruction, the functional variety, supports a form of banking style education that views persons as passive receptacles for knowledge. Banking education of this type protects the prevailing social order from criticism or possible change by indoctrinating individuals with dominant ideological messages that naturalize or reify prevailing social and economic practices:

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others is a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. (Freire, 2000, p. 58)

Ironically, the more economically disadvantaged persons work at encoding the information supplied by functional literacy education, the less they attain the critical consciousness required for individual and social transformation. Functional literacy and banking education accelerate a fall into the ideological abyss that is the actual source of the individual's despair. The more they struggle to free themselves from the dehumanizing impact of capitalism by following capitalism's rule, the worse their circumstances are apt to become.

Functional literacy views the world as a fixed and objective theater in which players must simply seek to play out their assigned roles rather than attempt to choose their own role. Literacy, as part of the schooling ideological apparatus becomes an exercise in false communication by instilling the prevailing hegemonic myths in virtually all of popular consciousness. Schools are dangerous places where authenticity is replaced by hegemonic values and beliefs. Lankshear (1993) summarizes some of myths promoted in this market discourse description of social reality that permeates education:

> The oppressive order is a free society; all people are free to work where they wish. If they do not like their work situation they can find another job: the social order respects human rights and is therefore worthy of esteem; anyone who is industrious can become an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory; the dominant elites, recognizing their duties, promote the advancement of the people, and the people for their part should accept and conform to the words of the elites; private property is fundamental to personal development – the oppressors are industrious whereas the oppressed are lazy and dishonest; marginal groups are naturally inferior and elites naturally superior. (p. 102)

In the presence of such overwhelming ideological condemnation, many economically disadvantaged persons view themselves as directly responsible for their own miserable circumstances. This misguided self-loathing increases their dependency on the "generosity" of those offering to help them participate in the existing social and economic order. Perhaps the job at WalMart or MacDonald's is really all they deserve. They should be glad to get any work. Thus, functional literacy instruction as false generosity appears to the disadvantaged and marginalized as an act of social compassion rather than one of control, indoctrination, and exploitation. Most people accepting such assistance are appreciative of the "help" they receive.

Powerful ideological messages signal to economically disadvantaged persons that functional literacy and the modes of instruction it entails are legitimate. The message is that the elites, whose literacy levels far exceed the minimal standards of contemporary schooling, are being generous and charitable by helping illiterates

participate at a subservient level in the contemporary market framework. In fact, this act of false generosity harmonizes the interests of the ruling elites and further undermines the interests of the supposed beneficiaries. Its actual effect drives economically disadvantaged persons deeper into the vicious cycle of dependency, vulnerability, and despair.

False generosity frequently occurs in education when paternalistic forms of literacy are bestowed on barely literate individuals to ameliorate their condition within existing structural conditions, or to lessen the effects of their inherited economic circumstances. Unfortunately, the current drift toward state intervention in neoliberal economies may indeed represent more an act of false generosity by propping up a failing economic system than a move toward genuine socialism. Lankshear (1993) describes a paradigm case of false generosity:

> A model case of false generosity is where well-to-do people make their services available to unemployed or poorly paid workers to teach the latter how to budget their inadequate finances. The presumption is that the problem of poverty lies within the individual – in the low or underpaid worker – and not in the economic structure. (p. 103)

Even if these acts are motivated by good intentions, their effects remain inevitably negative over the long haul. As Lankshear (1993) explains, the role of unintended consequences in preserving the social order and promoting dominant economic interests has been clear for quite some time: "We have been well-warned about the roles (conscious as well as unconscious) of traditional intellectuals within stratified—in our case capitalist, social orders" (p. 109).

True generosity consists not in fighting "illiteracy" with domesticating methods of instruction, but rather in challenging the socioeconomic structures that marginalize people in the first place. Freire (2000) explains that,

> True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (p. 29)

The dehumanizing consequences of instrumental instruction generally and functional literacy in particular underscore the importance of including esoteric, humanizing ingredients in literacy education that include a sense of political empowerment and the right to define one's own place in the world. Lankshear (1993) explains that, in the final analysis, functional literacy is actually a "dysfunctional" literacy that creates an entire class of minimally literate and politically passive individuals:

> We can represent Freire's distinction between domesticating and liberating forms of literacy as the distinction between forms of literacy which impede or enable, respectively, the proper performance of our function as human beings. Domesticating literacy contributes to our dehumanizing in so far as it thwarts performance of our function. . . . we may refer to domesticating literacy as dysfunctional since it undermines our function. (p. 109)

As we argued in Chapter 2, one of Freire's central concerns with banking education practices is their impact on human ontology. In other words, they erode the intellectual requirements of rational beings. Instrumental learning and functional literacy practices undermine humankind's rational, creative nature by reducing persons to the level of mere objects and means, rather than treating them as ends in

themselves. Although functional literacy may provide learners with certain practical social skills, it fails to satisfy the human ontological need for imagination, creativity, reason, and praxis.

A Humanizing, Liberating, and Critical Approach to Learning

"In problem-posing education, [people] develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2000, p. 70). Perhaps the major difference between proponents of instrumental schooling and those advocating critical pedagogy is that those of us in the latter group consider illiteracy a symptom of economic marginalization rather than its cause. Advocates of critical and transformative education appreciate that illiteracy and low academic achievement result from unequal social relations embedded in the organization of society and often reproduced through education. Indeed, the far more tenable argument is that people are not poor because they are illiterate but are illiterate because they are poor and oppressed.

Individuals in difficult social circumstances because of their economic situation often lack meaningful opportunities to achieve high levels of quality education. In fact, "one of the most consistent findings in the research on literacy is that children's literacy attainment is directly related to their parents' socio-economic status" (Sloat & Willms, 1996, p. 14). In the early stages of their lives, economically disadvantaged children are rarely exposed to literacy of the same quality as children from more privileged social backgrounds. This not only handicaps an economically disadvantaged student's short-term classroom success, but may impact on her/his long-term academic performance as well:

> Children without a secure literacy background are greatly disadvantaged and less likely to meet with success later on. If early language learning is insufficient, children continue to experience problems throughout their entire schooling. (Sloat & Willms, 1996, p. 14)

As a result of curtailed literacy development and its concomitant impact on academic success and social development, economically disadvantaged students are less often recognized in the classroom for their intelligence (Sloat & Willms, 1996). The result is that many such students are streamed into programs that marginalize them further by limiting their exposure to higher quality education and, in the process, deny them access to the intellectual culture of society. Margaret Winzer (1996) explains, "The common assessment measures used by teachers and psychologists may reflect a social or socioeconomic bias and reinforce existing inequalities in the selection of these [poorer] children for special programs" (p. 269). Economically disadvantaged children may fail to meet acceptable standards of social and intellectual behavior and, therefore, their intelligence may be overlooked within the classroom environment. Winzer observes that, "When children are stereotyped by social status, we are likely to overlook giftedness and tend to underrate them

because they do not conform to our expectations" (p. 161). Hence, in many cases, economically disadvantaged learners, in spite of high intelligence, are once again marginalized by an education system promising to advance their interests.

While economically disadvantaged children suffer the difficulties associated with academic marginalization, many economically privileged children are provided the opportunity to develop comprehensive literacy skills and procure access to the cultural capital that promotes "success" within a capitalist framework. More correctly, it ensures they become oppressors as opposed to oppressed. This process first occurs through early exposure to literature at home, and later through better access to high quality post-secondary education. By achieving a higher quality literacy education economically privileged children are able to retain their empowered social, vocational, and political positions as adults. The differential access to education perpetuates the cycle of social stratification, maintains disparate literacy levels among differing socioeconomic groups, and, in the final analysis, protects existing class structures from transformation.

The humanistic and egalitarian social vision included as part of the critical education advocated by Freire is predicated on specific moral presuppositions. Indeed, social justice forms the basis for Freire's attack on functional literacy and banking education. In Freire's critical pedagogy, students learn a moral discourse that includes ethical guidelines to evaluate social organization. Moral issues related to social opportunities, including education, are adjudicated on the basis of how well they comply with basic humanist principles such as equity, fairness, and social justice. All citizens in an egalitarian society must have equal access to the intellectual capital it generates. In her *Draft for a Statement of Human Obligations*, Simone Weil (1991) articulates the humanist and Marxist perspective forming the moral basis for critical pedagogy:

> Equality is the public recognition, effectively expressed in institutions and manners, of the principle that an equal degree of attention is due to the needs of all human beings. The need for truth requires that intellectual culture should be universally accessible, and that it should be acquired in an environment neither physically remote nor psychologically alien. It requires that in the domain of thought there should never be any physical or moral pressure exerted for any purpose, which implies an absolute ban on all propaganda without exception. (p. 10)

As Weil suggests, any society denying some people access to its intellectual culture, regardless of the reason, also denies them access to various conceptions of truth and justice grounded in different disciplines and bodies of knowledge. Weil's moral imperative also has profound implications for the practices of a consumer society driven by insatiable wants while many others—an increasing number—are simply left wanting. This denial of truth is the act of violence to which Freire refers as the outcome of instrumental learning.

Most proponents of critical learning, including Freire, avoid offering concrete definitions or detailed explanations of what different approaches might be employed in classrooms. Rather, the focus is often placed on what critical pedagogy is able to achieve through relational learning that generates knowledge and understanding

about historical context and agency. In critical learning, then, the aim is to encourage learners to deconstruct and challenge dominant discourses and conceptions of truth, and to appreciate how these prevailing elements offer only a selective version of social reality. Whereas instrumental schooling practices prescribe certain information that favors the elites as objective knowledge, critical learning exposes all knowledge to potential questions and dialogical debate. Later in this chapter, however, we offer some examples based on how transformative learning might look in the classroom.

Learning to read and write in functional literacy education is considered an apolitical process that helps poorly educated individuals achieve upward economic mobility by preparing them to fill the human resource needs of neoliberal capitalism. In this approach to literacy education, students learn to read and write about a social reality that is inappropriately presented as fixed, objective, and absolute. Critical literacy, on the other hand, situates reading and writing within the particular social context in which it occurs. It focuses on the specific social practices validated in text, i.e., ideologies, and considers the social consequences of the thematic messages these discourses convey to learners. In its most ardent form, critical literacy as envisioned by Freire contextualizes reading and writing within the framework of social issues and power relations. Once learners understand the contextual basis of discourse they can gain a richer appreciation for the ways that society is culturally constructed to support the interests of the oppressors and then reproduced by dominant discourse practices. Because society is constructed in response to certain consciously held motives contained in these discourses, however, it is also subject to conscious transformation, or conscientização.

Critical literacy can assist social transformation because it encourages students to question the source of embedded discursive assumptions, and appreciate the impact on their lives of the social "reality" presented. As Kathleen Densmore (1995) suggests, understanding the contextual nature of text is fundamental to critical literacy:

> Recent studies situate literacy in its social context, concentrating on specific social practices and conceptions of reading and writing in particular settings. Scholars argue that particular practices and conceptions of reading and writing vary for different groups of people, depending on the context. (p. 301)

The varying social contexts that occur in a given text often include competing interest groups with differential access to economic and political power in society. By revealing the ways in which these various groups, including women and the poor, are presented and the particular spin placed on the information provided, the learner discovers the ideology supported by the text or discourse in question.

Monolithic points of view that portray students as objects of education violate Freirean pedagogical principles because they exclude alternative visions and perspectives. The various ways in which literacy practices affect social viewpoints may often be subtle, but remain ideologically powerful. Learners should be encouraged not only to question the validity of textual content, but also to ask why certain literacy skills are learned in the first place. For example, if a classroom exercise involves

learning to fill out a credit application, then the consequences of performing this task might be examined. Learning to complete a credit application, an example often actually employed in functional literacy education and assessment (Lankshear, 1993), is not just about learning to read and write. It is a subtle, but nevertheless coercive, form of indoctrination into a specific construct of social behavior. It operates to validate a market economy system essentially controlled by elite banking interests, and teaches individuals to depend on corporate "generosity" in the form of interest-making loans for their material well-being and happiness.

In fact, borrowing money from the very institutions that already have a large measure of control over their lives can make economically disadvantaged people even more vulnerable to corporate pressure and control. When learners begin to appreciate the fact that text, regardless of its presumed innocence, carries ideology, they can begin to approach all sources of information with a certain degree of skepticism, a starting point for thinking critically about all issues. Within the free-market context, the critical pedagogy developed by Freire encourages learners to question the motives and interests veiled in corporate discourse, thereby exposing the social injustices that economically disadvantaged individuals regularly face.

Freire's critical pedagogy enhances an individual's ability to challenge the moral foundation of cultural belief systems, expose ideological agendas, and analyze political actions according to what may be and often are covert intentions. All people inherit a language and, as a result, are influenced by the cultural artifacts it carries. Individuals learn to name the world with descriptive symbols, grammatical rules, and entire discourses, i.e., the prevailing corporate one that they themselves did not create. As they learn and employ a preexisting language, the accompanying values, assumptions, and social values it imparts are also transmitted. The primary objective of critical literacy education is to teach learners this socially constructing aspect of language and, in the process, improve awareness about how discourses influence individual and social consciousness.

From the earliest stages of critical learning, students may be encouraged to question textual authority by reading and thinking in a challenging, reflective, and contextualizing fashion. Reading critically, contrary to some curricular suggestions, is not as simple as employing one generic technique. Rather, it requires some knowledge of the multifaceted ways that text conveys meaning and imparts ideological messages. Unfortunately, the emphasis in literacy education within schools is more often placed on selecting "appropriate" texts for learners than on teaching them how to critically engage any text regardless of content. In *Ideology & the Children's Book*, for example, Peter Hollindale argues that there is too much stress placed on what children read and too little on how they read it. Hollindale (1988) suggests that children beginning a critical literacy program might be asked a series of questions to help them reveal clandestine messages contained in stories. Some of the questions include, "Are desirable values associated with niceness of character; Who are the people who 'do not exist' in a given story; downgraded groups may include servants, foreigners, girls, women and blacks" (p. 7).

These types of questions are valuable to the critical literacy pedagogue because they help reveal the ideological messages that books convey through subtle but

persuasive thematic devices. In critical learning and literacy, the objective is not to perpetuate the existing ideological structure by conditioning child behavior through exposure to socially acceptable texts, a feature far too prevalent in many children's books. As Mary Pipher (1995) observes, for example, girls in fairy tales, "wander away from home, encounter great dangers, are rescued by princes and are transformed into passive and docile creatures" (p. 19). Rather than indoctrinating young learners by instilling misguiding fairy tale myths and hegemonic values, critical literacy seeks to help them understand the various ways that what they read, see, and hear impact on both themselves and society.

To offset the conditioning power of text, critical learning encourages students to read multiple sources to evaluate the truthfulness and social impact of the thematic messages conveyed. Discussing a variety of opposing viewpoints may reduce the possibility that learners draw conclusions based on an inadequate range of information coming from hegemonic sources that control curriculum. In the process of examining various perspectives and discourses, discussion focuses on how the knowledge presented is selected, whose interest it serves, and how it might function to privilege some groups over others. By asking these questions students learn that many books, and the values they convey, are written to serve the interests of specific groups, most often those of the dominant culture.

As Freire suggested, the process of becoming critically literate is intrinsically connected to an increased consciousness of one's sociohistorical conditioning and situatedness. Kincheloe et al. (2000) describe critical learning as follows:

> Teachers from the new paradigm seek new ways of conceptualizing the world. In the spirit of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, they problematize the information that confronts them by asking penetrating questions and by challenging simple answers to complex issues. Problematization in this critical new paradigm involves asking questions such as: Where did the knowledge come from? Who benefits from the acceptance of this knowledge? An ability to recognize these power dynamics makes up much of what Freire has called "critical consciousness". (p. 77)

At the beginning of their formal education, learners are likely to view the world as a static entity and see their role as one of mere conformity to prevailing expectations. As they progress toward conscientização, student consciousness and social awareness are transformed from that of passive information processors to reflective and active subjects in knowledge creation and political change. If Freire's transformative education achieves its objective, the transition in individual consciousness should ultimately manifest itself in very practical ways.

The immigrant worker employed in a textile factory, for example, becomes critically literate in English not merely to enhance her employment prospects, but also to criticize and transform through praxis unfair, unsafe, and unacceptable employment practices. After coming to understand her situation and then engaging it politically to improve her working conditions, the worker comes to see herself as an active transforming subject rather than the object of corporate oppression. When such an individual is afforded the intellectual skills to question her situation and possesses the discourse to describe and change it, she has attained what Freire terms transitive consciousness, the highest level of literacy education:

> This level [of literacy] is marked by depth in interpretation of problems, self-confidence in discussions, receptiveness to other ideas, and refusal to shirk responsibility. At this level persons scrutinize their own thoughts and see proper causes and circumstantial correlations between events. (Elias, 1994, p. 187)

Problem solving in the Freirean sense examines the entire social context and theoretical causes of the problem at hand, rather than trying to solve the problem within a limited range of "correct" solutions. In a contemporary educational context, this means that critical literacy not only examines the presuppositions and consequences of the market economy discourse, but also questions the education system operating to support it. As Wolfgang Klafki (1995) points out, understanding the connection between social forces and education is fundamental to the establishment of a critical pedagogy:

> Critical is best understood in the sense of social criticism, which implies constant reflection on relations between school and instruction on one hand (their goals, contents, forms of organization and methods), and social conditions and processes on the other. (p. 14)

It is only after understanding Klafki's simple but important point that education practices are shaped by social forces that students may become critically literate. When socially reproductive ideologies operating within the education system, such as functional literacy instruction, are revealed to learners, there is the potential to counteract their effects.

Although Freire's critical learning is a sociopolitical movement incorporating schools, it attempts to move beyond the current construct of schools as institutions of social indoctrination and change. Schools are reframed to become intellectually liberating rather than intellectually domesticating social forces. The goal of critical education is to help all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic, ethnic, religious background, sexual identity or preference, become politically participating, informed citizens in thick democratic societies. The point of educational praxis, quite distant from the conventional purpose of schooling in American life, is to eliminate oppression by pursuing the notion of an active citizenry based on self-dedication to forms of education that promote models of learning and social interaction that have a fundamental connection to the idea of human emancipation. Critical education understands that as long as various cultural and ideological forces influence individual consciousness to the present extent, true democratic franchise, humanization, and personal freedom are virtually impossible.

Exemplars in Critical Pedagogy

Although, as we have reiterated, there is no single way to proceed or "method" in critical pedagogy, Knoblauch and Brannon offer an excellent example of how a lesson in Freirean education that challenges the prevailing corporate discourse on globalization might proceed. From a Freirean perspective, the lesson plan offered by Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) effectively challenges the corporate practices perpetuating the present economic disparities both at home and abroad.

The lesson for adult learners is entitled "The Pervasiveness of the Global Market." Each student in the class is asked to write five responses to five questions on an index card, and they are then provided the opportunity to converse with other students about the information on their card. The questions include,

- What is your name?
- Where do you work?
- What do you do?
- Where was your shirt made?
- Who made your shirt?

Subsequent to initial small group discussion where these questions are first raised, students return to their seats and a general conversation ensues about where the shirts were made, who made them, and why they are made there. Asking questions about why clothing is manufactured in developing countries satisfies the critical learning requirement that textual information i.e., the fact that the clothing is made there, be contextually situated and analyzed. Why is the clothing made in China or Indonesia? As a result of their investigation into corporate manufacturing practices in the textile industry, students begin to learn about the tremendous human costs associated with global market practices, and they can evaluate the morality of those practices accordingly. Given the current economic collapse across modern industrialized countries these same types of concentric questions may be asked to reveal the core causes of worker displacement in countries such as the United States and Canada.

Asking where their clothing is made and why it is made there is only the first step for learners in raising related questions on corporate activities in economically disadvantaged regions of the world. In a follow-up activity, students in the Knoblauch and Brannon example are encouraged to research, discuss, and compare working conditions for textile workers in the countries where their shirts are made with conditions for garment workers in their own country. Not only is this activity likely to improve their global knowledge and knowledge about global working conditions, but students also learn about the real lives of economically oppressed persons exploited by global market economy practices. According to Knoblauch and Brannon, questions addressed in this session might include,

- How many hours a week is the worker employed?
- What is the hourly wage?
- Does the worker belong to a union?
- Who is her/his employer?
- What are the worker's employment and living conditions like?

After researching these topics, students are encouraged to share their findings about international workers either individually or on a group basis with the rest of the class depending on class organization. Knoblauch and Brannon (1993)

indicate the answers provided by students to these kinds of questions are often socially revealing and morally troubling:

> Mexico: 48 hours a week; 34 cents an hour; no union; Kimberly Clark factory; no ventilation, no exhaust fans, lots of dust causing headaches, sore throats, and eye infections. The worker lives in a cardboard shack with a corrugated tin roof; no running water or sewage disposal system. USA; 11 hrs a day; $3.50 an hour; no union; Singer factory; machines that burn workers, sewing machines that cause injuries, a lot of caustic chemicals and potential dangers such as open elevator shafts; lives with a family of five in a one bedroom apartment in Brooklyn. (p. 149)

During follow-up activities students are asked to read about the global factory system and its impact on working and environmental conditions.

To fully satisfy the conscientização objective of Freirean pedagogy students could also be asked to submit proposals on how working conditions for garment workers both at home and abroad might be improved to an acceptable moral standard, and submit these suggestions to the appropriate government authorities. This type of political action following student analysis of the topics described above engages them in the praxis element of critical pedagogy. Students also learn that improved social understanding increases political power. As a result of their analysis and political action, students and teachers potentially improve conditions for themselves, the education system, and the entire global community.

Gibson (2009) provides an example of Freire's teaching that he actually applied while working in Latin America. The example focuses on revealing how education is linked to power and the importance of teachers being involved in the daily lives of students:

> A typical Freirean social inquiry method would trace the path of (1) a careful study of students' surroundings and everyday lives, followed by (2) a codification session with students where key factors of life were drawn as pictures. The (3) students would be urged to look at the pictures not simply as reality, but as problems: first as individual problems, then as collective problems with underlying reasons. As codification led to problem solving, relevant words were linked with the students' drawing of the world, and reality repositioned as human creation. Finally, (4) students were called on to use their newly won literacy as a way to make plans for change. Specifically, a picture of a peasant's hut and a bountiful hacienda would be paired with a drawing of a peasant hoeing and a patron at rest. Why does he rest in a hacienda while we sweat and live in huts? (p. 2)

Regardless of their divergent backgrounds or opinions, the voices of all students in a critical learning classroom should be heard, listened to, and considered. Indeed, the individual expression of different perspectives forms the basis for a critical dialectic or dialogue as we pointed our earlier, a fundamental element in transformative education. The ability to participate fully in the classroom conversation is critical; consensus silences marginalized voices, whereas open inquiry expects and encourages differences. When all can participate fully, the group changes. Power and control shift as individual thinking that resists normalized ideas and values develops, and social expectations and relationships also change. A context is created where inquiry and communication are open and where changes in views, perspectives, and roles are expected.

This is the central idea in Habermas's (1996) communicative discourse and Freire's entire approach to education operates on the premise that disagreement and debate (the dialectic) are healthy, necessary components of both education and a democratic society. The former's discourse ethics may be summarized in the following three principles:

> Principle 1: a principle of universalization, one that intends to set the conditions for impartial judgment insofar as it constrains all affected to adopt the perspectives of all others in the balancing of interests. The principle of universalization itself states: All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects [that] its [a proposed moral norm's] general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone's interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation).
>
> Principle 2: Only those [moral] norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse. In short, the conditions for the practical discourse out of which universally valid norms may emerge include the participation and acceptance of all who are affected by such norms, as such norms meet their interests.
>
> Principle 3: Consensus can be achieved only if all participants participate freely: we cannot expect the consent of all participants to follow "unless all affected can freely accept the consequences and the side effects that the general observance of a controversial norm can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the interests of each individual". (p. 93)

The role of the critical literacy pedagogue is to ensure that students whose voices might otherwise go unheard have the chance to participate in classroom discussion and their views, if not accepted by others, are at least seriously and fairly considered.

Students should be encouraged to listen critically to the views of others, and engage them in dialectical discussion to work through the various perspectives advanced. The critical pedagogue who actively encourages student perspectives avoids the contradiction recognized by Freire of deposing old authoritarian, free-market ideologies with new authoritarian positions by exercising classroom authority to mute dissenting opinion. By beginning classroom discussions with issues first raised by students, the classroom environment stimulates discussion based on student concerns without the teacher paradoxically, and ironically, positioned as the "liberating authority" on all topics. Instead, students participate in a learning community where they are able to express their thoughts freely and read "against," or challenge the authority of dominant discourses.

Critical pedagogues sensitive to the cultural constraints placed on individual consciousness are a prerequisite for promoting critical classroom debate. The full exploration of a student's immediate, and seemingly trivial, concerns in classroom discussions, conferences, or group work, for example, may lead the entire class to broader ideological issues from where such concerns causally emerge. Through critical education, learners understand that many of their so-called personal problems, i.e., low self-esteem and self-efficacy, are in fact generated by the current historical, socioeconomic, or cultural context in which they find themselves; in other words, their "personal" problems are frequently the result of their social situatedness and the social structure of opportunity.

To understand one's position in the world, to read the word and the world as Freire suggests, it is necessary to consider the physical form and material conditions in which one enters it. Indeed, understanding individual context and how these conditions influence perceptions of self and society is the fundamental starting point for transforming individual consciousness and enhancing social awareness. This social awareness is the initial step in creating the just society that Paulo Freire and Joe Kincheloe made their entire life's work.

Summary

Although there are certain approaches for teachers to employ, we wish to emphasize again there is no single prescribed formula or fixed set of procedures to apply in critical education as envisioned by Freire. He would probably tell us to invent our own, use our own creativity to achieve humanization. However, there is the constant need—as the examples above indicate—of an ongoing curious, probing, searching, and investigative stance toward text, discourse, and the socially constructed world. Reduced to its most fundamental requirement, critical pedagogy simply requires a curious and determined mind, the willingness to entertain alternative conceptions of human beings and society, and an egalitarian social vision.

The primary objective in Freire's critical learning approach is fostering student appreciation for the contextual antecedent causes of their personal circumstances. Once students understand this aspect of language, they realize that even ostensibly benign curricula and a range of social messages include powerful ideological messages promoting hegemonic interests. This recognition is followed by encouraging learners to question the practical legitimacy and moral appropriateness of the ideological messages and, as we have illustrated by way of example, to explore a range of other social and economic issues related to these messages.

Critical pedagogy in the Freirean sense explores the broader social context in which schooling and work occur. Rather than learning to fill out credit applications, for example, students may be encouraged to examine banking profits and question their moral appropriateness during a time of severe economic hardship for many workers within the ethical guidelines of social equity and fairness. Students might be asked to question whether Wall Street profits are an indication of general economic well-being or elite privilege. Finally, encouraging subjective expression in critical pedagogy is the beginning point for individual political empowerment and social action. Freire, with his typical gift of philosophical eloquence, describes it this way:

> Depth in the interpretation of problems: by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations; by the testing of one's own 'findings' and openness to revision . . . by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions; by soundness of argumentation; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics . . . by accepting what is valid in both old and new. (Freire cited in Mackie, 1981, p. 96)

In *Freire, Praxis and Education*, Reginald Connelly (1981, p. 78) outlines 10 ways Freire maintained that banking education impedes the existential development and agency of students. The list describes pedagogical approaches to be avoided by

teachers wishing to empower students as active participants in the learning process, and we have included it for that purpose. Indeed, for all of Freire's deep philosophical understanding and complexity, his ultimate message as a "pilgrim of the obvious" is a surprisingly simple one to follow. We find it fitting to conclude the text with this list of what not to do as a committed critical pedagogue:

- The teacher teaches and the student is taught.
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
- The teacher talks and the students listen—meekly.
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
- The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
- The teacher chooses the program content, and the students comply.
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
- The teacher is the subject of the learning process while the pupils are mere objects.

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