

Running Head: PAOLO FREIRE: A RADICAL VIEW OF EDUCATION

Paolo Freire: A Radical View of Education

Evelyn Tonette Lester

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Paolo Freire: A Radical View of Education

The life experiences of Paolo Freire, coupled with his keen insight into critical thought as a means of liberation, gave way to literature that would unshackle the minds of individuals ranging from the depths of Third World countries to the heights of middle class citizens throughout the world. Freire's controversial writing from the critical theorist perspective would eventually establish him as one of the most innovative and influential thinkers of his time, as he sought to illuminate the dark chasms of unassuming, oppressed minds. The global span of Freire's ideologies are evident in his increasing posthumous book sales, particularly his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and the numerous references and citations in current editions of educational literature.

Critical theory emerged in Germany in the 1920s, though the term was not coined until 1937 (Bronner & Kellner, 1989). Steeped in Marxism, "...critical theory maintains a nondogmatic perspective which is sustained by an interest in emancipation from all forms of oppression, as well as by a commitment to freedom, happiness, and a rational ordering of society" (p. 2). Pai, Adler, and Shadiow (2006) suggest that critical theorists sought to "Legitimize oppression and reinforce the roles of the oppressed through uncritical acceptance of social order" (p.148). Critical theorists also emphasize a need for critical literacy as a form of liberation. Critical literacy exceeds the traditional definition of literacy as reading and writing to include literacy as a means of recognizing power relationships in order to bring about systemic social change. Freire, noted for his literacy campaigns throughout Brazil in the early 1960s, sought to educate thousands of disenfranchised peasants. His attempts led to a seventy-day prison sentence and his ultimate exile.

Freire experienced firsthand the impact of class differences in society. He was born into a middle-class family in 1921 Brazil who lost their social and economic status in the midst of the 1929 global depression. Followed by the subsequent death of his father when Freire was thirteen, his family moved to what was considered the poor side of town. It was during this time that his view of the world and his place in it was morphed into a view of a world in need of liberation and emancipation through radical means (Freire, 1970). The experience of hunger and poverty in a world which was previously unknown to him forged a bond of solidarity between Freire and those children who had been oppressed for their entire existence and knew no other way of life. This solidarity would later be a significant factor in his ideology, without which liberation is a mere illusion. According to Freire (1970), “Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture” (p. 49).

Freire’s dance with poverty would have such a profound effect on him that even after he rejoined the ranks of the middle class upon receiving scholarships to elite academies and law school, he opted to earn a meager living as an educator in lieu of what could have been a lucrative career as an attorney. His decision to become an educator, political activist, emancipator, and voice of the oppressed has had a significant impact on modern education reform efforts, especially those that attempt to break out of the traditional shell and empower learners to take responsibility for their own learning through democratic processes and dialogue. While John Dewey was clearly the frontrunner of twentieth century educational thinkers, Paolo Freire’s ideologies concerning learners as objects in terms of oppression provide an alternative viewing lens to educational reform, what might be considered an extension of Dewey’s thoughts.

One such example of Freire's ideology as an extension of Dewey's thinking is the concept of the learner as a receptacle or depository. In his book *How We Think*, Dewey (1910) states:

In some educational dogmas and practices, the very idea of training mind seems to be hopelessly confused with that of a drill which hardly touches the *mind* at all- or touches it for the worst-since it is wholly taken up with training skill in external execution. This method reduces the "training" of human beings to the level of animal training (p. 52).

Freire offers insight similar to Dewey's, describing education as static and teachers as narrators to meek students who merely deposit and accept their knowledge as truth without question. Yet Freire (1970) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, extended the concept to include: "But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who get filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system" (p. 72). The notion that learners get filed away, or simply lose themselves in compliance for lack of the ability to think for themselves is the oppressive nature of the educational system to which Freire refers.

Though standardized tests and recent accountability measures have revealed traditional methods of education and so-called best practices produce less than stellar achievement results, despite countless reform efforts over several decades, capitalism and fear of the unknown continue to dictate the continued use of traditional means with no end in mind. Critical theorists maintain that in oppressive societies, the curricula serves the needs of the oppressors through subliminal transference of the dominant agenda, thus subjugating the oppressed in a such way that they willingly maintain the status-quo. They

also contend that teachers, whether intentionally or not, serve as incubators of oppressive means of education and are responsible for its transmission to society in a process Freire refers to as the *banking* concept of education.

Freire challenged the system and called for revolutionary reform in education through critical thinking, in which participants engage in *conscientização*, the acquisition of metacognitive skills through dialogue with the intent of recognizing oppressive elements in society in order to take action that results in liberation. He contends that the unwillingness of some men and women to engage in *conscientização* is due to trepidation. Freire (1970) stated: “Fear of freedom, of which its possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he or she prefers to the risks of liberty” (p. 35).

In the introduction of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) warns that: “The pedagogy of the oppressed...is a task for radicals; it cannot be carried out by sectarians” (p. 39). Freire chose to refer to himself as a radical, diametrically opposed to sectarianism of the Right. He wrote:

Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism, is always castrating. Radicalization, nourished by a critical spirit, is always creative. Sectarianism mythicizes and thereby alienates; radicalization involves increased commitment to the position one has chosen, and thus ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality. Conversely, sectarianism, because it is mythicizing and irrational, turns reality into a false (and therefore unchangeable) “reality” (p. 37).

This document will serve to explore and examine Paolo Freire’s ideologies regarding the complex relationship that exists between the oppressed and the oppressors,

his banking concept of education, and his pedagogy of oppressed peoples. The first two sections will simply serve as a guide to understand Freire's ideologies. Solutions will not be offered until the third section, which focuses on the pedagogical processes prescribed by Freire. A primary focus will be to determine the precise nature of the current educational system in America with respect to traditional learning methods and oppression, while a secondary focus will seek to determine if a relationship exists between oppression and sub-populations with respect to accountability measures.

Oppression

Though Freire (1970) does not formally define oppression in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it can be surmised that he narrows it down to one word: *dehumanization*. Freire describes the relationship of oppressors and those they oppress as one of sado-masochism. Oppressors and their compulsive addictions to possess *things* such as money and property creates in them a tendency to objectify their surroundings, or transform everything and everyone into something to be possessed. Freire describes the oppressor consciousness:

They cannot see that, in the egoistic pursuit of *having* as a possessing class, they suffocate in their own possessions and no longer *are*; they merely *have*. For them, *having more* is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own "effort," with their "courage to take risks." If others do not have more, it is because they are incompetent and lazy, and worst of all is their unjustifiable ingratitude towards the "generous gestures" of the dominant class (p. 59).

Generous gestures in today's society might consist of relief efforts such as welfare for single mothers, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, or even accommodations in prisons

and state-supported mental institutions. While all of these generous gestures are supported by working citizens, the recipients are not always as grateful as society expects them to be. According to Freire (1970), “False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands” (p. 45). The ungratefulness of the oppressed as described by Freire is indicative of inner frustration and hopelessness experienced by millions around the globe who feel they have nothing to lose. Gilbert (2003), in his book *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality*, contends that since the 1980s homelessness has spiked dramatically and that as many as 36 million Americans are considered poor. He states: “Any serious discussion of poverty in an affluent society, which also regard itself as democratic, inevitably stirs political emotions” (p. 244).

Of the oppressed, Freire (1970) stated: “In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the “eminent” men and women of the upper class” (p. 62). Freire asserts this aspect of the love-hate relationship that exists between the oppressed and their oppressors is rooted in a duality within oppressed individuals. This duality can be compared to the low self-esteem of abuse victims who have internalized the mentality of their abusers. It is the internal conflict to either completely expel the oppressive consciousness and recapture one’s humanity, or to remain silent that becomes either the inception point of one’s liberation, or one’s noose to the underworld of the walking dead.

Once the decision is reached to make the transformation from *being for others* to *being for themselves* (Freire, 1970), the oppressed must critically analyze the historical

events that led to their disenfranchised state. Freire (1970) contended that oppression in most societies was, in most cases, initiated by acts of violence by those in power. He stated: “This violence, as a process, is perpetuated from generation to generation of oppressors, who become its heirs and are shaped in its climate” (p.58). The harsh treatment of Native Americans during the nineteenth century and slavery in America are examples of acts of violence that corralled groups of people into cyclical oppressive states. The effects of those acts continue to plague both groups and have affected their quality of life for many generations. Freire (1970) added:

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. Both are submerged in this situation, and both bear the marks of oppression (p. 58).

It is for this reason that the oppressed must engage the oppressors in their struggle for liberation. The sadistic consciousness of oppressors enables them to justify their dehumanization of others through unauthentic meager attempts to ameliorate the ills of those they oppress. Beyond this they are unable to initiate attempts of liberation, as it might affect their ability to possess, or to have. According to Freire (1970), “...the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle” (p. 47). Freire warned against yesterday’s oppressed peoples becoming today’s oppressors. He suggested that restorative acts, although they may require some violence on the part of those seeking liberation, should focus on humanity for all, including the oppressors. Freire (1970) conjectured a paradoxical relationship exists

between rebellious acts of violence by the oppressed and the subsequent love between the formerly oppressed and former oppressors as a result of such violence. He stated:

As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression. It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, who as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to solve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation (p.56).

Freire (1970) warned that the love between former oppressors and those they oppressed would not be instantaneous. Immediately following a conflict resolution, those formerly in power do not feel a sense of liberation. They in turn will feel violated because they considered domination over others an inalienable right bestowed upon them by previous generations. Therefore, resistance from those in power is inevitable in that they stand to lose control over a society of people who appeared to be complacent in their stifled conditions. When Freire (1970) implemented his literacy campaigns in various regions of Brazil, the military and those in power imprisoned him for fear that literacy among peasants might ignite critical thinking about their conditions; thus Freire was considered a threat to their reign of control. There is evidence in his statement: "Any restriction on this way of life, in the name of the rights of the community, appears to the oppressor as a profound violation of their individual rights..." (p. 57).

The intimate tango between oppressors and those they oppress plays on in many facets of society: racism, sexism, ageism, poverty, religion, and education, to name a few. The music may change, but the dance remains the same. The divergent relationship between those who have power and those who seek it remains complex. One strata promotes stability in order to maintain the status quo, while the other works toward transformation to improve their lot. Freire's depiction of this relationship has inspired awe from some and outrage from others. Whether awestruck or outraged, it cannot be denied that Freire has a profound impact on his readers.

The Banking Concept of Education

John Dewey was a crusader for intellectual freedom. In his *Experience and Education* (1938) he stated: "The only freedom of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgement exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while" (Dewey, 1938). In his *How We Think* (Dewey, 1910) he stated: "For freedom of mind means mental power capable of independent exercise, emancipated from the leading strings of others, not mere unhindered external operation" (p. 64). Dewey considered traditional classrooms in which students respond on cue to external stimuli a hindrance to intellectual freedom. Dewey believed a direct variation exists between freedom of movement and freedom of intellect. When children are allowed freedom of movement to interact with their environment, they construct meaning that will have a lasting effect.

Freire was also an antagonist of the traditional classroom setting. Not only did he consider such classrooms stifling to the intellect, he also deemed them oppressive. In the second chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) discussed his analysis of the

teacher-student relationship at various levels and determined that, “Education is suffering from narration sickness” (p. 71). He adds:

Narration (with the teacher as the narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be filled by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are (p. 72).

The ideology of teachers as depositories and students as receptacles is what Freire refers to as the banking concept of education. He suggested that the projection of absolute ignorance onto students suppresses their ability to think for themselves. Freire (1970) mirrors Dewey’s concept of free play in the education process in his assertion that, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). Freire believed that education for the purpose of power or domination assumes that people exist independent of the world and not as a part of the world. This is related to his ideology of oppressors’ tendency to objectify the world and reduce people and possessions alike as objects to be owned or dominated.

Although educators teach of a democratic society, they do so utilizing undemocratic methods. Students are given no choice in what they learn or how they will go about the learning process. Traditional methods continue to support the banker-receptacle model, while data reveals that certain population subgroups are not achieving academically. Freire (1970) contended that oppressors use the banking concept of education to subdue and domesticate individuals. He stated: “Any situation in which

some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (p. 85). From this statement it can be inferred that tacit oppression in the guise of free, public education is heinous and fatalistic to those it is imposed upon.

Freire (1970) refers to teachers as regulators, or the means by which students receive the world. In oppressive societies, teachers carry out the agenda of the oppressors in traditional classroom settings where they fill the minds of compliant and unquestioning students with unauthentic truths. He noted that adult education, in terms of the banking approach, specifically avoided critical thinking lest, students experience *conscientização*. Freire (1970) ideated:

Those who use the banking approach, knowingly or unknowingly (for there are innumerable well-intentioned bank-clerk teachers who do not realize that they are serving only to dehumanize), fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality (p. 75).

Most people would argue that a direct variation exists between education and knowledge. However, Freire’s radical perspective of knowledge as power indicates there is, in fact, an inverse relationship among these variables. This implies higher levels of education yield lower levels of authentic intelligence. Perhaps those farther away from the oppressors, who experienced fewer years of indoctrination of the oppressors’ agenda, are actually more cognizant of the oppressive state that exists. Those highly educated members of a society, who have been thoroughly indoctrinated, fully bathed in the oppressors’ ideologies, are actually the gatekeepers of the dominant agenda, similar to the

overseer of slaves, thus the masters' henchmen. It can be inferred that it is the uneducated individuals, the most poverty-stricken, downtrodden members of a society who must begin the struggle for liberation. A prime example of such an act was the refusal of Rosa Parks to relinquish her seat on a bus to a white man after a hard day's work at a department store in Selma, Alabama in 1955. That single act led to civil rights litigation of such magnitude that would overturn the separate but equal clause and bring the nation to its knees. The middle-class members of society are too awestruck in their adoration of the oppressors and their desire to be like them, therefore they are either unable or unwilling to begin the process of liberation. Freire (1970) made a tacit inference to middle-class society when he stated:

And since people "receive" the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated individual is the adapted person, because he or she is better "fit" for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purpose of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it (p. 76).

Freire (1970) mentioned that upper middle-class citizens of a society, those who lurk in the shadows of the oppressors but cannot enter their world, are often prone to drinking and domestic violence. They are in a sense sub-oppressors. Educated and aware of their oppression, they vent their anguish on those around them (p. 65). Their higher levels of education allow them insight by virtue of common sense, yet they cannot resolve their inner conflict in order to level the disequilibrium they experience in their state of oppression.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Dewey (1910) was a proponent of learning by means of natural instincts and ability. He believed that natural curiosity is the intellectual force that impels young learners to explore and construct meaning of the world around them. Modern thinkers associate his ideology with current brain-based learning methods. Dewey stated: “To the open mind, nature and social experience are full of varied and subtle challenges to look further. If germinating powers are not used and cultivated at the right moment, they tend to be transitory, to die out, or to wane in intensity” (p. 33). The phenomena of knowledge transfer to the long-term memory of students continues to baffle educators and social scientists in their quest for the holy grail of achievement.

Freire, looking through his radical lens in impoverished Brazil, sought to obtain the freedom of thought that Dewey referred to, but felt it could only be done by utilizing revolutionary tactics. Though he mentioned violence in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he actually used critical literacy as a means to free peasants from their mental shackles of oppression. His dialogue with peasants, in an effort to lead them to *conscientização*, would eventually establish a basis for his pedagogy.

Freire’s pedagogy of oppressed peoples describes the ways in which the oppressed engage their oppressors in order to attain their freedom. He warned that the struggle for liberation is not an easy task. In fact, he compared it to childbirth. Just as one cannot be slightly pregnant, it is impossible to make a feeble attempt at transformation. Once the decision is made, the oppressed must be thoroughly engaged and committed to do whatever it takes to accomplish liberation. Freire (1970) theorized that the realization

that liberation will only come through transformation in the form of a revolution is the result of *conscientização*. He stated:

It is essential for the oppressed to realize that when they accept the struggle for humanization they also accept, from that moment, their total responsibility for the struggle. They must realize that they are fighting not merely for freedom from hunger, but for freedom to create and construct, to wonder and to venture. Such freedom requires that the individual be active and responsible, not a slave or a well-fed cog in the machine...It is not enough that men are not slaves; if social conditions further the existence of automatons, the result will not be love of life, but love of death (p. 68).

Implications in education involves critical thinking on behalf of educators regarding curriculum and delivery methods. Freire would probably not use the term delivery because when something is delivered, it is given or transferred from one to another. Liberating education, according to Freire, does not involve delivery on the part of the teacher. Education in a free society requires learning on the part of both teachers and students. A humanizing pedagogy fosters critical thinking and metacognition with the intention of liberation. Freire (1970) stated:

A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice *co-intentional* education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge (p. 69).

Freire mirrored Dewey in that he believed stifling natural curiosity would lead to a dullness that would have no lasting effect on learners. Freire believed acting naturally,

that is, questioning and reacting *with* the world and not *of* the world, was acting responsibly. Traditional classroom settings that use the banking system of education initially create a disequilibrium in learners because they are frustrated. It can be surmised that traditional classrooms act against what is natural for learners, yet Freire believed that the initial anguish of learners eventually gives way to adaptation in the form of compliance. Tozer, Senese, and Violas (2006) gave an example of grave injustice in which traditional classrooms were used as a control mechanism in the education of Native Americans, who valued interaction with nature. In an attempt to civilize them, the federal government took their land and forced their youth into Indian boarding schools.

Freire (1970) believed: “Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity” (p. 84). This problem-posing education suggested by Friere rejects the notion of the teacher as the path to knowledge in its entirety. The teacher-student relationship is instead one of mutual consent in which they learn from one another. The shift from a teacher-centered environment to one that is learner-centered requires extensive dialogue between what were once considered polar opposites.

Implications

The radical ideologies of Freire, in his approach to liberation by means of education, are not as far-fetched as they appear to be after an initial perusal. It is necessary to reread and delve deeper into his thought process to fully understand his concept of a revolution. If literacy, specifically critical literacy, is not power, then why do oppressors deny the right to obtain it to those they oppress? As in Brazil, American slave owners denied the right to literacy for their slaves in order to maintain obedience. As is human nature, curiosity led to *conscientização* among the slaves. They questioned the

motives behind their denial of the right to read. Eventually they surmised there must be a significant reason they were banned from reading. There was a secret, something the white man was keeping to himself, something so powerful that a slave would be severely beaten or possibly killed if they were caught with a book. As Freire suggested, continued oppression will eventually lead to a revolution. Eventually some slaves risked their lives to learn the white man's secret through the formation of pit schools in the woods, where they taught each other to read (Tozer et al., 2006). Slave basic literacy eventually gave way to critical literacy, which led to the formation of the Underground Railroad and a movement toward their freedom. Even without facilitators such as Freire in Brazil, the oppressed will eventually find ways to obtain what are their natural rights, specifically human dignity.

The struggle for freedom can only begin when the oppressed realize they have been destroyed. They cannot simply mend their broken structure, they must tear it down completely and rebuild it. This tearing down in the literal sense is the actual ejection of oppressive elements from the mind and facing the reality of what *is*, the actual existence of the conflict and the reasons behind it. If the oppressed only try to fix what is broken with minimal reform efforts and preventive measures, they are not truly engaged in the struggle for liberation, thus it will not be realized.

One intent of the current accountability system, No Child Left Behind, is to reveal the true nature of the beast in education. It is to serve as, if you will, a reflective device so that educators can hold themselves accountable for student achievement. Educators, in turn, hand the mirror to the community at large so that parents and society can see how their socioeconomic conditions affect student achievement. Those parents in affluent

neighborhoods smile into the mirror, while others turn away in shame. They cannot bear to think that their inability to provide or lack of involvement is the reason their children are not successful in school. Lack of parental involvement is frequently identified as a factor in low student achievement. Are we to assume a positive correlation exists between income and love for one's children?

Students in our traditional classrooms are on the brink of *conscientização*. It is apparent by their actions and attitudes. They wage mini-rebellions in our schools every day in the forms of baggy, sagging pants, shirts that hang to their knees, grills and mouth plates, and tattoos. These miniature acts of defiance, such as the refusal to tuck in their shirts, are evidence of the frustration and hopelessness they feel in a place that is supposed to build them up, yet destroys them with ceaseless control mechanisms that stifle their creativity and restrain them to the extent that they feel suffocated.

At one time schools implemented uniform policies to level the playing field with respect to socioeconomic factors and the esteem of students. At present, schools are implementing uniform policies to combat the ways in which oppressed students express themselves, whether through colors associated with gang involvement or pants that they must hold up with one hand. School districts continue to maintain the status quo despite the fact that the numbers of defiant students continues to increase. They respond by building alternative placement centers for those students who are unable to comply and attempt to disrupt the order of the traditional school setting. Society at large responds by building more prisons.

In order for public schools to survive, they must meet the needs of those they serve. If students are not learning in schools, then the schools serve no purpose. What

worked back then will not work now. The students, society and the world as we knew it have all changed. We are now all connected with the mere push of a button. So why is it that we think schools and the way we learn must remain the same? It is one thing to be steeped in tradition, yet it is entirely another to be steeped in ignorance and stupidity for lack of creativity or mere stubbornness, all at the expense of public education as we know it. Who among us will take the first step toward the liberation of our children? If we, as educators, do not free them, according to Freire (1970), they will find a way to liberate themselves. Shift happens. Freire stated:

If children reared in an atmosphere of lovelessness and oppression, children whose potency has been frustrated, do not manage during their youth to take the path of authentic rebellion, they will either drift into total indifference, alienated from reality by authorities and the myths the latter have used to “shape” them; or they may engage in forms of destructive action (p. 155).

Decades later, even after the discovery of the white man’s secret, African American males continue to lag behind the bell curve in student achievement. Male LEP students are currently the lowest subgroup with respect to achievement on state-mandated standardized tests. Is there really a phantom group of elite dominant white males that furtively infiltrate the minds of minorities with subliminal messages in their textbooks and other curricula? Is there really a conspiracy to keep minorities from achieving in America so they can remain in poverty?

Conspiracy or not, we must address the needs of individuals, not subgroups. Assuming all African American males are impoverished, and all Hispanic males cannot communicate in the dominant language is inane. Grouping students to reveal inequities in

learning for the purpose of improvement is not evil. The breakdown is at the implementation stage, when districts and educators group students under the same umbrella for the purposes of classification in terms of ability. Achievement and ability are not synonymous. America, as a whole, is in need of what Freire would call a cultural revolution. Tolerance infers what one must *put up with*, or abide. Racial tolerance, then, means we must put up with one another. When we teach racial tolerance in our schools and in society, we are teaching cultural elitism. There are too many educators that need to cease the mere toleration of their diverse students, and instead appreciate and learn from them. Freire believed that in order to assist the oppressed in their own liberation, it is necessary to walk in solidarity with them. Anything less is considered unauthentic rhetoric that supports the oppressors' hidden agenda. To truly liberate our schools, we must teach in our schools with our students, not at them.

References

- Bronner, S. E. & Kellner, D. M. (Eds.). (1989). *Critical theory and society: A reader*.
New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.
- Dewey, J. (1910), *How we think*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Dewey, J (1938a). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Freire, Paolo (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum
International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Gilbert, D. (2003). *The American class structure in an age of growing inequality*
(6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, Inc.
- Pai, Y., Adler, S. A., & Shadiow, L. K. (2006). *Cultural foundations of education*
(4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Tozer, S. E., Senese, G., & Violas, P. C. (2006). *School and society: Historical and
contemporary perspectives* (5th ed.). New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill
Companies, Inc.