

LUCHANDO UNIDOS POR LA LIBERTAD: THE LATINA/LATINO STRUGGLE
FOR EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the historical relationship between education and the political sphere in order to understand the current dynamic between education and democracy in the United States. The project discusses how the present institution of public education has inherited values and beliefs from Western political thought, reminding educators the education system has been used to impose racial and gender distinctions. Due to an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural American democracy, educators must critically address the exclusionary practices and principles within the public education system. Additionally, relevant educational policy is both a culmination of the historical relationship between education and politics in the United States and a major cause of educational transgression. Policy such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 presents a majoritarian narrative perpetuating white privilege and, contrary to its prescriptive purpose, leaves minority students far behind. The educational attainment of racial minority students continues to be a fraction of the attainment achieved by their White counterparts, and Latina/o students in particular have the lowest educational attainment of all minority students. This disparity is significant as the Latina/o population is the fastest growing minority group in the nation, especially in the Southwest. By drawing from the educational philosophies of Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire, and Nel Noddings, this thesis makes the case that educators must redirect their pedagogical efforts towards the needs of historically oppressed students in proposing a

pedagogy informed by humanity, liberty, and care that enables the development of meaningful student-teacher relationships.

Para mis futuros alumnos.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“I remember I was in a classroom without a teacher for the whole first six weeks. I showed up every day and hanged out or did my homework but half the class dropped out. I ended up getting a grade for just showing up. This was the first time I really saw how the school didn’t care for me or any of us. If I learned or if I didn’t learn, so what? I remember feeling very depressed about that. Then I got angry.” (Valenzuela 1999)

In 1848, Horace Mann popularized the idea of education as the “great equalizer of the conditions of men”. We can see from this student’s retelling of her educational experience 150 years later, the school blatantly and obviously did not give her an equal opportunity for education. Currently, U.S. education continues to be perceived as a tool for empowerment and improvement of one’s present state. However, the notion of education as a “great equalizer” and equally accessible to all continues to be challenged even after the historical *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision and court cases in the Latina/o education struggle (primarily in the Southwest), before, during, and after the Civil Rights Era. Students and educators believe education can, and will, help all achieve their dreams and passions; we believe education enables greatness if only one is willing to work hard enough. However, time and time again many disadvantaged students who have faith in this belief find they fail to measure up and come to the brutal realization they did not in fact have an equal opportunity. It is no secret students of color, in comparison to their white counterparts, have low academic achievement. Although policy-makers and educators tend to turn towards funding as a solution for inequity and

seek out problems in the student, we must turn a critical eye on the education system itself.

The current bureaucratic structure of the American schooling system devalues the experience of minority students resulting in low academic achievement and social inequity. This inequity is an important matter of social justice because the exclusion of minorities in education – particularly the growing Latina/o population – limits the effectiveness of a fully participating democracy. The exclusionary, narrow approach the education system takes to Latina/o (and other ethnic minority) students is contrary to the foundational American democratic principles of equality, liberty and justice¹. American democracy was founded on these principles and the profound belief that the people should be responsible for ruling themselves; the aim of education in a democracy is, generally speaking, to prepare members of a society towards this end – though historically education has been focused on a particularly homogeneous population (i.e., white, male, and privileged). However as the racial and ethnic diversity of the nation continued to grow, inequality and tensions emerged throughout American history as demographic changes created social, political, and economic conflicts. The institution of education must take a serious look at a system created only for the privileged and address how equal access has now become a necessity for significant participation in the public realm. Though 80% percent of American history is fraught with inhumane legal,

¹ As this thesis will further discuss, the French liberal political principle of community (or fraternity) is missing in a meaningful way from American political values. The argument will be made that an ethic of genuine caring can serve as a framework for the development of this principle.

racial and gender oppression, the democratic framework need not be understood as inherently racist and sexist. As the historical treatment of minorities and underrepresented populations continue to be uncovered, we must come to understand democratic principles such as equality, liberty, and justice as more inclusive of all people.

Before laying out the structure of the thesis, it is necessary to illustrate the substantial growth in diversity and how it translates into the educational attainment of minority populations, particularly Latinas and Latinos. The Latina/o population is an especially interesting minority group to study in the United States because of the fluid nature of their racial identity and the role played as an immigrant population throughout American history. Unlike other immigrant populations, Mexicans had a unique historical claim to the land in the Southwest before it became a part of the United States. As such, many families can trace a historical and geographical heritage for several generations. Although Mexicans living to the North of the Rio Grande were granted citizenship with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, their membership in the United States has remained socially, politically, and economically marginal. Within the last decade, Latinas/os² have made the largest contribution to the population growth since 2000 and are projected to outgrow the White population (especially in the Southwest) by 2050 (Murdock 2014).

The exponential growth of minority populations also indicates a growth in families of low socioeconomic status. Researchers and policy-makers are well aware of

² Although the U.S. Census Bureau categorizes Latinas and Latinos with the term “Hispanic”, I refrain from its’ use in solidarity with scholarship that resists the term as it neglects differentiated identities and experiences while emphasizing the history of colonial conquest.

the demographic change and the challenges that will arise with increasingly widespread disadvantage. As Murdock et al. report, the “generational rift” growing between an aging White population and young Latina/o population also indicates a rift in economic mobility, and less mobility can be attributed to differences in culture, education, and language (Murdock 2014). As the growth of the Latina/o population is concentrated in youth, the need for an adequate educational experience is increasingly important. According to 2009 census data, only 61% of Latinas/os have a high school diploma or equivalent (Murdock 2014). In addition, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has consistently found a gap in reading and writing skills between Black and Latina/o students and their White counterparts (Murdock 2014). Although persistently low academic achievement and attainment translates into low socioeconomic status, the relationship between SES and educational attainment is biconditional; that is, being poor also correlates closely with low academic achievement. The demographic factors that most accurately predict educational disadvantage and lead to educational failure are: “1) minority racial/ethnic status, 2) living in a poverty household, 3) having a poorly educated mother (or surrogate), 4) living in a single parent family, or 5) having a non-English-language family background” (Murdock 2014). Within the next two to three decades, it is projected the nonwhite population will grow to nearly 54% (Murdock 2014). As educational attainment is the greatest predictor of income, it can also be predicted that close to 54% of the population will be ill-educated and poor. The relationship between one’s education and income is among the most frequently studied across disciplines, and consistently reveals that children born into poverty find

themselves trapped in its' long shadow late into adulthood (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2014). As Murdock et al. explain there is a vast nationwide growth in the Latina/o and other minority populations with low levels of education due to various, deep-rooted historical discrimination (Murdock 2014). Educational disparity not only negatively impacts minority populations through low socioeconomic status, but substantially impacts society as a whole. Although the conversation surrounding educational disparity is primarily concerned with its' economic effects, it is imperative for educators to maintain a primary focus on the humanity of their disadvantaged students in order to serve them properly.

Education is in crisis for all involved, and it truly harms everyone in our society. However, racially and ethnically diverse and disadvantaged groups are in a particularly oppressive situation due to historical and institutional discrimination. In order to transform this reality, historically oppressed people must reclaim and realize their creative capacities as human beings. Such a transformation will benefit society at large if a fundamental understanding of the democratic principles is extended to be more inclusive towards, and reflective of, the present multicultural and pluralistic American society. More specifically in terms of this project, the education of Latina/o students must engage with their lived experience so they may be empowered to recognize their agency as human beings and transform their reality. Chapter II begins with a historical analysis of the closely interwoven relationship between education and the political sphere – from Ancient Greece to contemporary United States – revealing how the meaning of democratic principles are continually deconstructed and redefined according

to the particular context. This historical exposition will show how the aim of education began to be defined through federal and state policy to the detriment of students, especially in 20th century America. Chapter III offers a critical analysis of current educational system and policies, revealing a troublesome dissonance between the purported ideals and the actual practices within particular schools. By looking through the lenses of Social Reproduction and Critical Race Theory, we can see how the educational system tangibly reproduces racial inequality. Before offering a more inclusive pedagogical approach inspired by humanity, liberation and care for the consideration of educators, I offer critical counterstories to illustrate how structural oppression and educational policy present a serious obstacle in the education of Latina and Latino students by barring the development of meaningful student-teacher relationships and discouraging transformation. Finally, Chapter IV turns towards the educational philosophies of Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and Nel Noddings to address the dissonance between theory and practice, structural and actual challenges. I argue a pedagogy informed by Montessori's humanity, Freire's liberation, and Noddings' ethic of care can provide valuable intersections worthy of exploration for teachers of racially oppressed students.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF EDUCATION AND THE POLITICAL SPHERE

Having now introduced the socioeconomic injustices Latinas and Latinos experience through the failure of the educational system in the United States, it is necessary to briefly outline the manner in which education has been historically utilized as a political tool to achieve contextually-defined political ends. Education has been conceived as the appropriate medium through which to cultivate the desired values and principles within citizens of a particular society since Ancient Greece. As such, education has an intergenerational effect transmitting beliefs, values, and practices to the subsequent generation. Chapter II traces the historical relationship between education and the political sphere from Plato's *Republic* to the most recent institutional phenomenon of educational policy in the United States. By tracing the changing aim of education and the specific group of students who are to receive such education, we can understand how we have arrived at the current conception of education within a democracy and ask whether the system is truly achieving its' purported ends.

Historical Tradition of Philosophy of Education

Beginning this investigation with Classical Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle clearly reveals the influence their political philosophies have had on the relationship between the educational and sociopolitical spheres throughout the Western tradition. As will be discussed, Plato and Aristotle first raise the question "does the state shapes the citizens or do citizens shape the state?" The same question is taken up again

by early modern and modern thinkers (from John Locke to John Stuart Mill) who explore the relation between education and the political sphere in response to a vastly changing world and society. The respective answer to this question varies according to the particular circumstances under which each philosopher lived and theorized. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly clear it is more likely the relationship between education and the political sphere is not one-sided, but cyclical. Especially as we approach a democratic conception of education, we see a move towards a process in which the state and the citizens continually shape one another.

Classical Period

Plato

A common and likely text to begin exploring the relationship between the politics and education is Plato's *Republic*. Though the dialogue is known as a discussion in response to the question "what is justice?", the text is rich with the possibility of tangential inquiries – including the sociopolitical implications of an interrelated conception of education, democracy as the furthest from a most noble government, and the corresponding role of women. In the ideal state Socrates and his interlocutors create, people are categorized into three classes, Gold, Silver and Bronze; those in the Gold class are Guardians and rulers of the state, the Silver class consists of auxiliaries with defensive military functions, and the Bronze class consists of makers and producers. The dialogue reveals Plato believed it was the state that should define the content of the education in order to raise corresponding citizens. The idea was (and which remains consistent throughout the theories of education in question) to begin education early in a

child's life so they can learn from the beginning what it means to be a member of a given community. Thus, the content of education for each class differed according to the function they served in the community.

The cultivation of the soul was quite aptly discussed as a response to the question of justice at the center of the dialogue. The Guardians were the governing class and thus required a noble education in order to achieve the greatest possible happiness of the community through the art of ruling. Guardians spent their time philosophizing and developing virtues such as justice, truth and courage in order to properly serve the citizens of the state. One of the more controversial suggestions made in the dialogue is it was not only possible, but likely, that women were members of the Guardian class meaning they shared in the same education as male Guardians. Such a claim seems uniquely egalitarian in light of the traditional Greek conceptions of women's nature (and indeed it was), but the conception of equal education of the sexes remained limited to the Guardian class. The education Plato prescribes is more of a reigning-in rather than a freeing, especially for the silver and bronze classes. Such an early distinction in classes and divisions (including gendered divisions) among people is problematic because it stifles potential creativity. Restricting one's access to certain types of knowledge and learning seems fit for the state Plato is constructing, but it does not seem a just practice for a modern American democracy; a lack of choice and aversion towards change to the extent discussed by Plato would appear unjust for a democratic American society.

As a matter of fact, Plato was not constructing a democratic society. Indeed, he presented democracy as a flawed, failing system of government one generation away

from a tyranny. A society with an oligarchic government was split in two cities: the rich and the poor. When there were beggars present, one could also assume evils were also abounding with “thieves and cutpurses and temple robbers” (Plato 2006). He attributes the presence of these evils to a lack of education, which allowed evil characters to be developed in both the rich and the poor. The rich man in an oligarchy is greedy and parsimonious for fear of being poor, and neglects his education for a life of fulfilling desires. From this parsimonious character develops the “insatiable desire to become as rich as possible” (Plato 2006), the character of the democrat. Once the rulers of a democracy prioritize and value wealth above all, then it becomes nearly impossible to cultivate temperate citizens. Since the poor also desire wealth, they take arms against the rich and thus a democracy emerges. The poor have regained their freedom and individual liberty to pursue one’s desires; one living in the current American democracy might wonder why it carried such a negative connotation for Plato. As Plato explains, absolute individual liberty encourages each person to build the life that best fits them producing a diverse society of different characters of citizens all with different, characters, desires and varied living conditions. Again, though this diversity sounds like a positive attribute to our present understanding of democracy, we must explore what Plato considered to be so evil about a democracy.

Plato grants a democracy is “the most beautiful of constitutions” as a mosaic of characters emerges given the freedom to be different. However since all are at liberty to choose their way of life, no one really takes on a leadership role unless they want to leading to a rather indifferent and directionless society. Indeed, the society is rather

anarchical when all are doing solely what they wish without consequences (including the thieves who take what is not theirs), no one around to regulate unbarred distribution or, in Socrates' words, "a kind of equality to equal and unequal alike" (Plato 2006). Furthermore, Socrates states "unless someone is of an extraordinary nature" in such a society, they would never learn to be a good person unless their environment was controlled and only "educated among beautiful things" (Plato 2006). Those raised in a democracy only cultivate unnecessary desires to pursue all sorts of pleasures through ignoble means. Democratic men do not learn to be temperate or to live in moderation, rather they learn to use their freedom to satiate their desires by any means they see fit: "There is neither order nor necessity present to his life, but he calls this life pleasant and free and blessed, and holds to it through everything" (Plato 2006). In other words, for Plato a society governed by complete equality is without prudence and concern for the well-being of a community. Although he acknowledges the beauty in plurality, it is not a desirable government because the best societies are those that are firmly unified through noble characters and concern for community.

Unification for Plato meant a subversion of the individual in order to give precedence to the well-being of the body politic. Although each individual had their own potential, they had to harness it and use it in a manner most productive to the state. An individual's potential and rightful place in society was determined early on in a child's life. Their designation in the Gold, Silver, or Bronze class would inform the type of education she or he was to receive. Plato was right to recognize we are not all the same; we have different talents, desires and potential. However, potential should not be

conceptualized in terms of degrees or innate intellectual capacity. All humans have the potential to be creative and education is a means of developing one's creative faculties to flourish. Our modern democracy is indeed a colorful mosaic of many different people; the standardization of education dictated by current legislation not only ignores the uniqueness of individuals but also dampens their creative faculties. Creativity, different perspectives, and an ability to listen to others are qualities that contribute to a well-functioning democracy, but the ultimate concern is how to overcome dehumanizing, oppressive impositions which diminish happiness and an ability to flourish in one's own right.

Aristotle

Aristotle is considered perhaps the most influential scholar to all of Western thought. His influence is not limited to politics and education, but spans across disciplines such as biology, logic, and ethics. The learning process Aristotle prescribed and followed was highly influential to a number of educational theorists, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and Maria Montessori.³ Aristotle believed man's function was living the good life, taking a functionalist approach to education. The "good life" could be understood as an active life in which the rational principle is engaged in virtuous action striving towards happiness (*eudaimonia*) as a final end. Philosophical contemplation (a dimension of education) and participation in the political sphere were part and parcel of a continual striving towards a virtuous life. Aristotle

³ For all three, the learning process is driven by a reliable method for inquiry in which each discovery is first ignited by curiosity, followed by careful observations, then analysis and reflection of gathered information.

states in the *Politics* that education is the way to unify the plurality that is the state. Striving for such unity was necessary due to our social tendencies as humans. These tendencies reveal we are political beings, and it is through the political sphere that we can build a desirable community. Friendship is one way to build a desirable community as it facilitates the successful interactions between members of a community. Of course, Aristotle defined a desirable community as one constructed out of virtue requiring the people, rulers, and laws to be virtuous. Education was thus a political tool used to cultivate inhabitants of a state who would pursue a good, virtuous life.

Aristotle believed the development of habits through practice should begin very early in a young child; as he learned with his most famous pupil, Alexander, at a certain age it is unlikely to learn moderation or control over firmly developed passions (Robb 1943, 202-213). A key component to successful development of proper character and habits was the careful arrangement of a child's environment; it is this particular aspect of Aristotle's education we can see in the educational theories of Rousseau, Dewey, and Montessori. In addition to molding and shaping the desired citizens of a community, education was also used to facilitate a pleasure for learning. Education could develop the necessary faculties for a contemplative life, which Aristotle considered a noble way of life. Contemplation is an intellectual virtue benefiting all the members of the state, including legislators and the general citizenry. Legislators and rulers should not only be experienced in political activity, but also capable of solving problems, which requires keen contemplative faculties in combination with useful action; in other words, education facilitated a proper balance between intelligence (mind) and action (body).

Legislators were responsible for making good, virtuous laws that good, virtuous citizens would easily choose to follow and obey. In sum, education was entirely a concern of the community at large; the purpose of which was to develop happy, virtuous, and intelligent citizens (Robb 1943).

Like most historical thinkers, Aristotle's definition of "citizen" was rather narrow. Men were considered the original state, and women were malformed and mutilated males; hence woman was less perfect and not capable of full citizenship, merely property of husbands or fathers. Due to Aristotle's functionalist perspective and his observations of the current sociopolitical position of woman, he believed women's inferiority was natural and innate. The explanations and conclusions he drew from biological experimentations reflected his belief that woman's function was limited to her reproductive capacities. If woman was not considered fully human and incapable of citizenship, then her education did not include a striving towards the contemplative virtues of men. Women's virtue was tied to her function, and thus her education was defined accordingly. Her education would not include participation in a political sphere, but mastery of a domestic sphere. If men were considered to be courageous, aggressive, and rational, women were meek, submissive, and irrational. In fact, women had no need to be courageous, aggressive or irrational because it was not in their nature. When compared to male standards of virtue, women were clearly inferior. However, women were only compared to womanly standards; how she measured up to these standards determined whether she had fulfilled her virtues. Aristotle's conception of men and women's nature is relevant to the present discussion because of the incredibly significant

influence his functionalist view has had on Western thought; double standards persist among men and women – and indeed, it can be extended to white and non-white races – in both society and education.

As stated above, man is a political animal and will form communities for the “mere sake of life” (Aristotle 1996). In Book VI of the *Politics*, Aristotle spends some time discussing the principles and characteristics of democracies; liberty, justice and equality are among these defining characteristics. Aristotle explains that when societies are built upon the principles of “equality and likeness”, citizens each take turns holding political office. When the government keeps the common interest of the state in mind, it is adhering to the principles of justice; this is a community of freemen and a democracy is a constitution in which the free, poor and many are rulers (Aristotle 1996). However, when the interests of the rulers take priority over those of the citizens, it is a perversion of the state and leads to despotism. Although Aristotle did restrict the term “free” to men, the principles we associate with a democratic state are mentioned: equality, freedom, and justice. Aristotle claims the truest forms of government are those that keep the common interest a priority, regardless of how many rulers there are (one, few or many). Aristotle calls a government in which many rule a constitution and its perversion a democracy⁴ because it prioritizes the needy and poor above the common good (Aristotle 1996). However, Aristotle notes that what is understood as democratic justice is not justice for all but for the equals; in other words, those who are unequal will also

⁴ Democracy, however, was the most tolerable of defective governments. The types of government, listed from best to worst, were kingly rule, aristocracy, constitution, democracy, oligarchy, tyranny.

have an unequal share of justice. Our present democratic society is surely guilty of this perversion, and it is a contradiction we can no longer cling to in our contemporary understanding of human rights and dignity for all. We must come to apply the democratic principles without arbitrary exclusions by means of race, gender, and class. This is not to trivialize the experience of those who are oppressed by these structural inequalities; the intention is to recognize these socially constructed categories as barriers to the humanization of the oppressed.

Early Modern Period

John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Mary Wollstonecraft were critical of the government's implementation of education; thus their discussions of education (though still related to the sociopolitical sphere) were outside of the domain of the schoolhouse. Additionally, Immanuel Kant universalized education in terms of education for humanity across space and time. As the early modern philosophers lived through the Enlightenment, they rejected the direct, dogmatic involvement of the government in the education of future citizens. From their emphasis on reason and individualism, we can conclude they all believed it was the citizens who shaped the state and not the other way around.

John Locke

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke prescribes a liberal political society in which education is based on the idea of natural equality, individual rights, and rule of law secured by a government established with the consent of the citizens. The education he discusses in *Thoughts* is to develop a corresponding citizen

who could govern himself in a morally and politically responsible manner. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Locke placed the burden of educating children on parents alone without state determination of the educational system at all. Locke dedicates most of his discussion in *Thoughts* to determining the type of character suitable for young gentlemen. In fact, *Thoughts* is a compilation of correspondence between Locke and friend Edward Clarke of Chipley, Esquire, who sought advice on how to raise his son (Locke 1996). As far as Locke was concerned, this particular education for citizenship was specific to boys who would one day be gentlemen and fulfill the appropriate role in society as adults. With the education of a particular English gentleman in mind, Locke assumes boys, who will one day become citizens, should desire liberty; thus his method discusses how a father can raise his sons to develop into liberal, moral citizens. Locke occasionally reveals insights about children in general; and though it may be unclear whether he means to extend the notions to children of all classes⁵, his thoughts on education have been understood as practical for children of various backgrounds.

The greatest challenge educators faced was encouraging a free spirit in children while also restraining them to develop proper conduct. It would seem this is Locke's attempt to counter Plato's conception of an anarchical and indifferent democratic character. As we now believe in our present democracy, it is possible to encourage the creativity and spirit of our children without turning them into intemperate and immoderate persons. Locke would agree with Plato that children needed to be

⁵ In fact there are a few instances when he mentions the education of girls (and princes) differs, thus Locke seems to believe a child's education corresponds directly to the position expected to be held in society (e.g., gentlemen, princes, girls, (Locke and others 1996).

surrounded by moral and virtuous models from whom to learn, but Locke would argue that free spirits complemented with reason could achieve an appropriate, liberal state. In order to encourage free spirits and develop proper conduct in children, Locke believed they needed to learn to have power over their desires. He did not expect desires to be completely abolished; rather he believed children should become accustomed to governing and denying their own desires. In doing so, children learned to be modest, submitting to their own rational authority while forbearing pleasures. Since the ultimate end for teachers was cultivating virtuous, liberal gentlemen, it was important to first focus on the development of proper character and comportment in early education before introducing scholastic knowledge.

Although many of Locke's educational values were specific to his context, his commitment to curiosity was particularly compelling. Locke believed it was especially important for educators to freely encourage children to develop their curiosity. Although most desires were to be suppressed, he strongly believed "curiosity should be carefully *cherished* in children" (Locke 1996). A desire for creativity followed the acquisition of knowledge; in other words, once the child learns something his curiosity is piqued and wants to learn more. Curiosity, states Locke, is "the great instrument nature has provided to remove ignorance ... without this busy *inquisitiveness*, [children] will [be] dull and useless" (emphasis original, Locke 1996). Locke stresses the significant role curiosity played in solidifying a firm foundation for inquiry. Key to this foundation is developing self-discipline and an internal desire to learn. This is an example in which a child's spirit is encouraged to be free towards a directed and useful purpose.

Though Locke's proposal can be partially problematic due to the exclusion of girls and lower classes, his recognition of curiosity in children can be quite useful to modern educators. He stressed that a child's questions should never be disregarded as foolish or unimportant. By denying a child's curiosity, the desire to continue learning becomes squashed; it is equally as important the answers provided to children's questions be neither deceitful nor eluding (Locke 1996). A child benefits tremendously if one takes the time to explain a particular answer because the knowledge acquired will bring further pleasure in satisfaction, and encourage future learning; a short, uncaring response could restrict further inquiry. Lying to a child is also damaging for if they accept false knowledge as truth it could lead to disparities in learning or trauma to their mind, trust in their teacher, and their overall method of inquiry upon discovering the truth. Locke suggests that attending to a child's inquires makes it possible to "offer things that may set a considering man's thoughts to work [and] there is frequently more to be learned from the unexpected questions of a child than the discourses of men" (Locke 1996).⁶ Locke's approach to creativity and a child's curiosity is perhaps the best lesson educators – parents, teachers, and truly all adults – can learn from his theory.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a severe distrust of the established institutions of family, government, church, and school. Both his distrust of

⁶ Maria Montessori also shows a deep respect for the child and their curiosity; she believes adults are responsible for causing the most damage to children's learning so we must be carefully attentive to their sensitivities. More specifically, Montessori believed it imperative for parents and teachers to observe the responses children have towards their environment, especially to its order and lack thereof.

government and his conception of the social contract influenced *Emile*, a discussion on cultivating the ideal classical republican citizen emphasizing the natural rights to life, liberty, and property. As Rousseau famously claimed, there is liberty within a social contract community, but we are not free. Upon our departure from the state of nature, we relinquished the right to be free for the increased promise of survival. In a state of nature, each relied only on oneself and was at the mercy of the will of others. The formation of a society meant establishing a general will all people have in common, as opposed to many individual and contrasting wills pitted against each other. Rousseau's conception of freedom seems to be influenced by Plato's notion of freedom without concern for one another. Freedom, in the state of nature, made it difficult to create self-sustaining, cooperative communities because each individual was free to act as they pleased. As will be further discussed, a return to a state of nature was ideal for Emile's early education, but evolving into a citizen and claiming his place within the social contract was the end goal.

Similar to his predecessor John Locke, Rousseau did not claim education was the responsibility of the government. The education of man – and it was exclusive to males – aimed to cultivate the perfect citizen to participate in the type of society governed by the social contract. Although a return to nature was the driving concern of education, it was not because nature was pure, but because it was simple; man, Rousseau argued, needed education to learn to be good (this belief is resonated by Kant in his treatise on education). Although the social contract was necessary for human coexistence, the political distractions were not conducive to raising children. The educational system

established by the government was only training children to transition into a vocation in adulthood. However, Rousseau considered the approach too narrow and damaging to the spirit. As such, Rousseau designed an educational method that took the child back into nature with a tutor to learn from the simplicity of nature itself.

Rousseau believed deeply in the importance of self-independence and rejected dependence upon authority. Thus, a child's education away from society allowed the pupil to learn from his own experience rather than blindly follow authority. Key to this education was the tutor's (seemingly) lack of authority in Emile's decisions and behavior; the tutor was only there to guide the pupil in his discovery. The tutor's facilitation in this return to nature was meant to be a hands-off approach to let Emile pursue his own inquiries because man learns best by doing. Emile learns to become good throughout his entire education. Rousseau, as his tutor, already has in mind the type of person Emile should be and can guide his education in that direction, i.e., Emile is to grow into an independent, self-reliant man. The young pupil should be free to discover and learn only from desire; this, Rousseau explains, is the only effective method for learning. Experience shows Rousseau had this right – one is not as open to learning when there is not a vested interest in the subject. If the pupil is not interested in the line of inquiry before them, it is difficult to learn and grow. We have learned from Rousseau and many other thinkers that education is growth, and growing is a difficult and trying process. Although one cannot accomplish growth through education alone, there are several points in the process when the student must independently face a challenge in order to grow. Success is not guaranteed when facing such challenges, but we generally

believe it is worth our while to struggle because when we reach our goal we will have both learned and accomplished a great deal. This particular process does not always work out and it may not fit the student. Some students might be facing a challenge they have no interest in and in this case, the struggle may not be worthwhile. Though a particular goal may not be accomplished, the student can walk away having learned they are not doing something that fulfills them. In such a case, the student still experiences growth through self-reflection in being able to distinguish the nature of the struggle and striving towards learning something that better suits them. In this sense, students should be allowed the freedom to pursue their own inquiries (much like Emile) without paternalistic imposition.

Rousseau was greatly influenced by Aristotle's functionalist view of women's role in society – i.e. sexual and procreative functions – as natural to her sex. Woman was a physical and sexual being whereas man was creative and intellectual; situating earthly practical characteristics and abstract cognitive functions as polar opposites. Rousseau distinguished the virtues of men and women as well; men's virtues were intellectual, civic, and complex while a woman's virtue was defined by her morals (remaining chaste, happy character) and as a head of her house (childcare, housekeeping, providing pleasure for her husband) (Rousseau 2003). If woman's nature was so radically different from man's, then it made perfect sense for her education to be completely opposite from Emile's. Rousseau dedicates the final chapter of his treatise to discussing the education of woman through Sophie. As Sophie's natural place in society was domestic, she did not need to be removed from society like Emile; Sophie's education was her mother's

responsibility at home. Sophie's education was not suited to make her into a citizen or an independent person, for these were neither woman's nature nor her role. Her education was naturally suited to her abilities, i.e. modesty, domesticity, and being completely submissive. Although Emile's education was defined by having the free will to determine who he was to become, Sophie's education was entirely defined by her functionality and (what were considered to be) her essential properties and characteristics, i.e. a housewife, mother and educator of children.

Rousseau believed Emile and Sophie could form the perfect partnership, as Sophie's character would be complementary, making Emile a better citizen by concerning herself with morality and devotion. Based on these assumptions and this division of gender roles, it makes sense that Rousseau wishes to educate Emile to be his own man while educating Sophie to be Emile's own woman. Emile could more easily exist without Sophie, than Sophie could without Emile; in other words, Sophie's agency was determined by the extent to which she could be the perfect partner. Rousseau viewed education as a way to give power back to the citizen rather than the tyrannical government; however he failed to realize the tyrannical rule man had over woman. The fundamental misogyny Rousseau (and other thinkers like him) worked under kept him from questioning the authority men claimed over women; in fact, he was more likely to justify the authority in defining women's experience from his limited perspective. However, Mary Wollstonecraft and modern philosopher John Stuart Mill realized the subordination of women was detrimental to all society, for men and women alike. Wollstonecraft offered her own perspective as a woman and fought for the legitimization

of her voice on moral grounds, though she continued to accept gendered divisions of labor. As we will discuss below, it did not follow that there must also be gendered divisions of intellect.

Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft, English philosopher and women's rights advocate, responds to Rousseau's narrow representation of what it means to be a citizen by criticizing his mistaken exclusion of women. Simply stated, Wollstonecraft wholeheartedly rejected Rousseau's Sophie. Wollstonecraft argued for the cultivation of rationality in women in order to preserve what she considered to be woman's duty to the home, family, marriage and children. Wives who practiced reason and exercised their intellect were more fully prepared to successfully fulfill her domestic duties as mother, educator, nurse, partner, et cetera. Though Wollstonecraft still prescribed to traditional gender roles, she sought to empower women to be independent, rational human beings. She believed women were meant to be mothers but in order to be good mothers, women also needed to be intelligent. In line with a distrust of authoritative institutions characteristic of Enlightenment thinkers, Wollstonecraft considered public education at the time to be a "hotbed of vice and folly" (Wollstonecraft 2012); thus the responsibility of educating children lay with mothers. Wollstonecraft argued Rousseau's education must be extended to include women so she could also develop into an independent citizen and become her own legislator.

Wollstonecraft keenly noted the conception of “woman” was a social construction⁷. Using Rousseau’s *Emile* to support her claim, Wollstonecraft argued women were taught to act in a particular manner, and it was not in their nature to be meek, submissive, and irrational. The kind of education women received made them into dull, non-thinking creatures who cared only of their appearance and developing the ability to please men. Wollstonecraft argued this education made woman's ultimate goal of marriage a legal form of prostitution. In exchange for providing a woman with material goods, wives must not only be mothers, but also present for any and all of her husband’s needs. Wollstonecraft argued that since a wife’s priorities were focused on pleasing the husband, she was failing in her duties as a mother; her children learned women are objects for men’s approval. Daughters began to emulate their mothers’ aspirations and the sons learned they were superior to women. Education was teaching girls and women to aspire to be weak creatures.

Wollstonecraft claimed it was morally deplorable to restrict the education of girls and women by not allowing them to exercise their rational faculty, for both women and men. Wollstonecraft argued women were not only perfectly capable of developing their rational faculties, but it was their God-given right to do so. Without reason, women would not be able to access and develop their spiritual selves’ on their own. Their social subordination made it so their only way to God was through her father, brothers, or husband. Woman could never wholly become a human being and pursue happiness without the ability to reason. Consequently, Wollstonecraft asserted women’s happiness

⁷ As we now understand race to be socially constructed to secure distinctions of power.

and the overall moral revitalization of society were crucially linked. Women's slavish dependence and men's tyrannical domination was contrary to virtuosity and created vicious characters in both sexes. Wollstonecraft was adamant that girls and boys must first be educated to develop their rational human characters without the distinction of sex. Without mutual and equal respect among the sexes, society would continue to suffer. Women who developed their intellect could never be degraded and treated as weak creatures. Once women and men had an equal share of rights, both could genuinely strive for the true virtue of reason. Despite Wollstonecraft's fiery advocacy against the social power imbalance of dependence and domination, it continues to be a problem our present society faces. Women and men of racial minorities are still restricted from the freedom to determine one's will, recognition of one's agency, and equal access to the cultivation of thoughtful and creative faculties.

Immanuel Kant

The incredibly influential German philosopher Immanuel Kant constructed a pedagogy of effort which requires will, activity and continual improvement in his treatise *On Education*. Education is necessary for man because man, as an animal, must be taught how to be man due to a lack of animal instinct. Developing man's natural gifts could not happen organically; the development of these gifts required the art of education. For Kant, education was an art involving doing, acting, and developing tendencies towards the good. Kant considered human education to be working towards an ideal dictated by reason. The content and methods of education must continually develop and improve the more man learns. The current generation learned from the

previous generations and educated the succeeding generation, so all humanity would contribute to an evolving pedagogy. The possibility of education was an obligation to develop oneself because man is uniquely and innately crafted to be open to reason; indeed, the possibility of education is open to all of humanity, past, present and future. Kant believed the continual improvement of education would also improve all humanity through a collaborative movement towards a happier state. The value of education goes beyond improvement and beyond an individual. Kant viewed education as a progressive interaction between the individual child and humanity in terms of reaching one's destiny. Destiny is, of course, unique to each individual but it ultimately contributes to the destiny of the human race. Kant considered this ultimate end in terms of morality. Morality is what gives meaning to man, hence it is also the end of educational thought and effort. Kant sought universal principles and so considered this educational end the absolute end towards which educational efforts should continue to aim. Kant's pedagogy was not limited strictly as a governmental responsibility, but believed education should continue until one learned how to be a free human being. However, he is not clear whether education should be a public concern rather than a private. Though Kant speaks more generally about educators and education rather than tutors or teachers within the school, educators needed to be among the more intelligent people, who sought the universal good while keeping in mind the ultimate end of humanity.

Kant's notion of a continually changing pedagogy allows for necessary, contextualized adjustments that need to be made to reflect the unique inquiries of the time. However, his goal to define "reason" and "good" in universal terms can restrict the

contingencies every generation faces. Terms like “freedom”, “liberty”, “equality”, “well-being”, “good”, and “reason” continue to be used as justification for certain values or principles. At their base, the definitions of these words have been relatively consistent but we ascribe meaning and understand them differently as the times change. For Kant, the notion of freedom within a marriage was construed differently for women and men; the former gained freedom while the latter gave it up (Buchner 1904, 11 - 98). As we continue to deconstruct the ideas and practices we have inherited, we begin to reject (and indeed, necessarily so) narrow, exclusionary notions that deny humanity to all persons.

Kant’s position on the education of girls can be considered one of his blind spots, like many of the thinkers of his time. Although his exact position can be somewhat unclear in his treatise, the absence of a discussion lends to the fact that although he speaks of “humanity” it is not an entirely inclusive term; in fact, we can conclude that when he speaks of the “education of man” it is truly limited to men. As Buchner explains in his introduction to the 19th edition of *On Education*, Kant’s conception of woman can illuminate what the education of girls might look like. For one, Kant definitely considered women’s cognitive capacities to be different from those of men: quoting Kant from as early as 1764, “The fair sex has understanding, just the same as the masculine; it is only a *beautiful* understanding; ours should be a *deep* understanding...” (Buchner 1904, 11 - 98). Another quote reveals women’s concerns should be for a particular man, though a man’s concern for a particular woman is restricting. Furthermore, women were capable and allowed to explore subjects such as history, music or art but not in the rigorous manner a man might, rather merely for emotive

reasons to experience beauty: “her philosophy is not subtilizing [sic], but feeling” (Buchner 1904, 11 - 98). Women’s education, similar to Rousseau’s conception, remains defined by the definition of femininity as concerned with delicateness and emotions. In fact, Kant considered it ridiculous for women to engage in study in a similar level to men because then she might as well be a man: “A woman who has her head full of Greek...or who carries on profound discussions in mechanics...may just as well have a beard”(Buchner 1904, 11 - 98). In other words, in spending her time cultivating the habits of men she failed at femininity. As we can see, these strict constructions of intelligence and function along gendered lines are so deeply rooted in our history that we must keep continually search to deconstruct and remove or recreate the meaning.

Modern Era

In his essay *The Subjection of Women*, John Stuart Mill advocates for women’s right to suffrage and equal access to education. He argued society was in a deplorable state because of the inequality between sexes. Essentially, it came down to domination and how one group (i.e., men) exercised tyrannical power over the other (i.e., women). As an empiricist, Mill rejected blind obedience to old customs and challenged the notion of belief in *a priori* knowledge and behavior. Since humans can only have knowledge *a posteriori*, and experience shows the tyrannical relationship between men and women was insufficient, then Mill logically argued social relations between the sexes should change and reflect experience. In this sense, we can conclude that Mill believed it was the citizens who shaped society.

Similar to Wollstonecraft, Mill argued marriage was the only legal form of slavery that remained. In fact, Mill considered wives to be in a worse situation than slaves because women were completely dependent on their husbands. Women's bondage was so powerful that women educated themselves and each other to give into that exact bondage. Although Mill generally maintained prescribed gender roles, traditional family structure, and divisions of labor, he argued women were equal to men and should rightfully be treated as such. With such a prevalent and tyrannical structure of power, humanity and civilization could not improve. Mill witnessed the good and freedom from the modern Enlightenment by countering old customs; but when this progress meant the continued exclusion of women, he believed modernity was severely misguided. In a note reminiscent of Wollstonecraft, Mill argued women were taught to develop "feminine" traits (i.e., weak, submissive, etc.) and men were taught to be sexually attracted to these traits. However, he argued, this was not women's natural inclination. In fact, these characteristics were a matter of education and the influence of custom. Mill claimed there was no way to really know woman's nature because they had never been allowed to just emerge and develop their particular tendencies. For Mill, it was unjustifiable to present customs on the basis as being "better" than an alternative, if an alternative had yet to be experienced. Mill wrote all men possessed unregulated power because of their relation over women. Although he is speaking out against the cruelty of subordination, he is still approaching man as the original or the standard. Admittedly however, Mill acknowledged men would have to adjust their tendencies towards women if they were

educated to be freely formed (and respected as) human beings. Instead of wielding tyrannical power, men would practice the spirit of chivalry.

Mill believed women's restricted access to education was a problem because it kept them from properly fulfilling their duties; unsurprisingly, educating children was among one of women's duties. Thus the question was: if women themselves were not properly educated, how could women possibly properly educate their children? Furthermore, Mill argued a better and more complete education for women would result in the ascension of the intellectual powers of all of humanity. The utilitarian argument was that by allowing women to develop mental faculties, the intellect of the world would effectively double. Women's intellectual contributions would stimulate men's faculties through competition, thus raising the standard and cycle of progressive intellect. Society was at a loss when only half of its population was able to serve their democratic needs and concerns, and truly it was antidemocratic. As Mill argued, the legal subordination of women to men was a denial of equality and truly hindered human improvement. We can see this notion of competition resurrected in the modern language of the educational policy No Child Left Behind. The democratic ideal of choice is construed in economic terms based on a free-market system. If parents are allowed the choice to send their children to higher-performing, "better" schools, it will encourage failing schools to work harder to earn back their clientele. To think of our students and schools as pawns on an economic chessboard, however, is woefully misguided and dehumanizing.⁸

⁸ Nel Noddings criticizes the present movement for choice in schools as deceitful because of its aim to provide equal opportunity to students. She explains by including the institution of

Democracy and Education in the United States

A democratic government is founded on a principle of self-government by the people of a nation. The American founding documents outline the principles for a government ruled by the people themselves, resisting the authoritative monarchy from which they sought independence. Thomas Jefferson in particular advocated for education and its' importance in cultivating an intelligent citizenry for proper self-rule. During the turn of the 20th Century, the meaning of an American nationality came under question due to two World Wars, an increase in European and Mexican immigration, and racial tensions during the Jim Crow Era. Education and schooling went from being a tool to prepare the elite for positions of power, to a way to inculcate “Americanness”, to a platform on which to demand equal opportunity to education regardless of race.

Founding Democratic Principles

In declaring independence from England, the founding fathers laid out what they considered to be the principles upon which American society should be built. Though the principles of liberty, equality, and justice were inherited from the long Western historical tradition, their meaning within each particular society continues to change. To understand the meaning of these principles at the inception of the United States, we can analyze the language in The Declaration of Independence. The drafters of this document appealed to the naturally endowed unalienable rights of man to life, liberty and the

education in the free-market system is misguided because “schools are not like commercial gas stations...[they] are like second homes to children” (Noddings 2013). To think of schools in an economically competitive market is especially dangerous because those schools that are in danger of closing down or forced out of the market tend to serve marginalized students.

pursuit of happiness. Surely it cannot be denied these rights were restricted to white, Protestant, property owning men when these words were written, consciously excluding women and people of color. However, the spirit of independence in this document advocates for the alteration and abolishment of destructive practices in government. The tireless work of human rights activists, on behalf of people of color and women, has continuously challenged this narrow understanding. The American consciousness in general acknowledges the rights to life and human dignity, but the practices of political and educational institutions are still fraught with racist and sexist tendencies.

The writers of the Declaration acknowledged humans can be resistant to change and “are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed” (Declaration of Independence 1960). The builders of the American Constitution were fighting for freedom from an oppressive governmental body ruling against their interests and without their consent; the monster we must now face is far more elusive — and perhaps more destructive — as it is built into our political, societal and educational structures themselves. Nonetheless, it is the people’s democratic duty to continue to uncover and challenge institutional racism when the rights to safety and happiness are being violated with poverty and dehumanization. As the Preamble to the Constitution assures, the democratic tools were crafted in order to ensure Justice, Tranquility, general Welfare, and Liberty to the current and future peoples in American society. Thus, it is of critical importance the People remain a central concern and the primary contributors to the success of a democratic

state. Furthermore, as a growing proportion of the People are People of Color, we must demand their rightful inclusion and full participation in American democracy.

Among all the founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson was the most adamant about the crucial link between democracy, liberty and an educated citizenry. Jefferson joins other Enlightenment thinkers in believing firmly in the power of intelligence and learning for progress. This key feature of change and progress tied to intelligence is foundational to the establishment of a participatory and deliberative democracy; indeed, adequate participation requires a knowledgeable citizenry. As Gordon C. Lee explains in the introduction to a collection of Jefferson's writings on education, Jefferson believed the state should produce and manage a "system of general instruction, which shall reach every description of our citizens, from the richest to the poorest" (Jefferson 1961). Although Jefferson advocated especially for the development of intelligence for political leaders, we can see from this statement he truly believed educating all members of society was necessary to create a government by the people, for the people. In addition, Lee explains Jefferson argued education had to be driven by self-sufficiency and social utility if it was to avoid indoctrination, exploitation, and enslavement (Jefferson 1961). American history will reveal our nation has indubitably been guilty of all three since our inception; however, one could argue it was due to the narrow understanding of "humanity" and "citizen". As we continue to broaden our understanding and definition to not only include but liberate historically oppressed populations, it is valuable to reconsider principles such as equality, freedom, and justice as they undergo transformation. As a democratic society, we cannot tacitly accept oppressive practices

and approaches in our modern perspective and experience; we cannot cling to anachronistic ideals, and at the same time we cannot ignore the damage oppressive practices and ideals have caused.

Progressive Era and Intelligence Testing

As we moved into the twentieth century, education and schooling continued to be a useful tool to socialize the desired habits and values of children. During the progressive era in the United States⁹, Americans were concerned with the growing diversity of the nation due to the rapid growth of European immigrant populations. The influx of diverse peoples who brought with them diverse cultural values and beliefs threatened the Anglo-dominant status quo of the nation. As Paula Fass explains, the climate of American society from 1870 to 1920 was a confusing time as people faced a variety of changes with the turn of the century in both their personal and social lives (Fass 1980, 431-458). Fass identifies immigration and education as dialectically opposed social forces that stimulated the conception of education as a tool of socialization and social order, including the emergence of intelligence testing as an effective and scientifically legitimate way to organize students according to their mental ability. Psychology as a field was on the rise, enabling ideologies of intelligence to be directly imposed in the public schooling system in a systematic way with aptitude testing. The developers of intelligence testing were motivated by a eugenicist agenda to improve the intelligence of the human race by identifying the intellectual elite; however, aptitude

⁹ There was also widespread support, especially in the intellectual world, for eugenics (Lemann 1999).

testing as a method to order students inevitably discriminated along racial and gender lines.

At the time, American philosopher John Dewey was well-known and respected for his work in many fields including democracy and education. In what has been called the Progressive Era of education, there was a particular emphasis on the importance of early childhood education as foundational to the growth and development of children, which included cultivating democratic values early in children to prepare them for participation in a democratic society as adults. Dewey's primary philosophical concern was with democracy; with hastened and far-reaching change affecting society, he asked, how could democratic goals be maintained by democratic means? (Fass 1980, 431-458) Dewey also advocated the application of scientific inquiry to address societal problems, such as the preservation of American values. A combination of Dewey's child-centered education with differentiated, individualized instruction and faith in science to face social ills enabled the next logical step to be implementation of intelligence testing in schools to sort diverse populations of students. In order to significantly influence (i.e. change) the values of immigrant populations, efforts had to be taken early in their lives. Thus, American public schools were deemed the most appropriate place for immigrant children and children of immigrants to learn how to be "American" in order to preserve the democratic values of the nation. With this new goal defined, schools were now committing their efforts not only to teaching literacy and other developmental skills, but also had the task of Americanizing children and categorizing those who did not meet the set intelligence standards.

Intelligence testing was first developed as a tool to measure the mental abilities of “feeble-minded” children by French psychologist Alfred Binet at the turn of the twentieth-century. Later revised by Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman in 1916, intellectual abilities according to gender and race continued to be at the forefront of scientific justifications. Terman was particularly crass in identifying intellectual inferiority according to racial and gender differences. Out of 80 percent of immigrants subjected to his tests, he writes:

Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least in the family stocks from which they are born. The fact that one meets with such extraordinary frequency among Indians, Mexicans, and negroes suggest quite forcibly that the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew...there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences...which cannot be wiped out by any schemes of mental culture. (Terman 1916, 362)

In discussing the relationship between intelligence and criminality, he writes:

But why do the feeble-minded tend so strongly to be delinquent? ... Morality depends upon...the ability to foresee and to weigh the possible consequences...and upon the willingness and capacity to exercise self-restraint...In other words, not all criminals are feeble-minded, but all feeble-minded are at least potential criminals. That every feeble-minded woman is a potential prostitute would hardly be disputed by any one. (Terman 1916, 362)

Although Terman was comfortable making broad generalizations about differences in behavior and intelligence along racial and gendered lines, the tests had only been administered in small experimental groups until the United States Army administered it to soldiers. This was the first time intelligence testing was so widely administered; the purpose of the testing in this case was to identify the cognitive capacities of soldiers to properly organize them into leadership positions and to generate data to legitimize the practice on a larger scale. The results of the testing revealed some disparities (coded as

“racial and environmental”) among soldiers, which allowed the Army to effectively and efficiently organize the soldiers according to the ability. The expedience of the process was so attractive that companies began to mass produce the intelligence tests and sell them to the school system, primarily in the form of the SAT to determine college entry. In addition, academic tracking reinforced the separation of children according to their performance on school-administered intelligence tests, “so high scorers could be plucked out and given the best schooling and the average low scorers consigned to a briefer, more limited education” (Lemann 1999). The results of their performance revealed influences from characteristics such as race, gender, and social background. Measured results and numerical representations encouraged a faith in the science behind intelligence tests and legitimized the practice; as such, discriminatory effects of the tests went unnoticed. The disparate results of the intelligence tests were accepted without much question by school administrators, teachers, and the public at large. The practice of intelligence testing was welcomed quite easily into education because it provided a practical and simple solution to the problem of socializing children in the school verified by authoritatively scientific results. Inspired by progressive ideals, the school system embraced and relied on intelligence testing to effectively label children according to a hierarchy of cognitive skills and justify individualized instruction according to their needs. However, this “individualized instruction” was translated as segregation along racial and linguistic lines. Since intelligence was linked to race and language, the logic of testing justified the separate schools for Spanish speakers and students of color.

George Sanchez, Chicano scholar and historian, explains in his foundational manuscript *Becoming Mexican American*, the assimilationist agenda was not unique to European immigrants. Mexican immigrants crossing the border into the American Southwest also faced hostile intolerance, immigration restrictions, as well as racial and social discrimination. Mexican immigrants and their children reacted rather differently from European immigrants partly because they were physically not white, but also because of their proximity to their country of origin and the fluid transmission of values along the border. In addition, quite unlike European immigrants, Mexican immigrants had a unique historical claim to the land in the Southwest when it was a territory of the Republic of Mexico.

Americanization efforts by government officials and other community organizations began to target women to influence the values of their husbands and their children (Sanchez 1993). California passed the Home Teacher Act in 1915 allowing school districts to send teachers to their students homes to “[instruct] children and adults in matters relating to school attendance...in sanitation, in the English language, in household duties...and in the fundamental principles of American system of government and the rights and duties of citizenship” (*The Home Teacher, Immigrant Education Leaflet No. 5* cited in Sanchez 1993). Within the schoolhouse, socialization programs were focused on children to teach them American values distinct from those of their immigrant parents. Intelligence testing in schools was administered in English, further segregating and identifying Mexican students as having lower I.Q.’s. Mexican students were pushed into vocational education tracks as well as citizenship classes to attempt to

incorporate them into American life though they remained restricted to lower social classes (Sanchez 1993).

Brown v. Board of Education and the Legal History of Mexican-American Education

The assimilationist agenda of the early 20th Century in the U.S. can also be found in some of the legal battles fought by Latina and Latino parents. In 1930, Jesus Salvatierra and other parents sued Del Rio ISD school board for depriving Latina/o students from the same resources White students received. Although the judge ruled students could not be segregated because they were Mexican-Americans, the school board claimed their separation was on the grounds the students were “language deficient” and needed individualized instruction (justified by ideologies of intelligence) in order to deal with their “linguistic handicap” (González 2007, 331-345). Furthermore, assimilationist efforts on behalf of the government are revealed in cases such as *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931) when Mexican students were not allowed to register in White schools. The judge ruled that Mexican-American students could not learn how to be American if they were kept segregated in the Mexican community. Though this was the first successful school desegregation case, it was argued on American nationalist grounds so Mexican-American students could shed their Mexican culture (González 2007, 331-345).

The American legal tradition is based on English common law, which emphasized freedom, equality, and justice for all citizens; this tradition is also firmly rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of reason, order, and progress. The presence of these ideals is obvious in a reading of the documents of the *Brown v. Board of Education*

(1954) decision. The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision has been considered one of the most important Supreme Court rulings because it repealed the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) making it unconstitutional to legally segregate schools according to race. Though the “separate but equal” doctrine of the *Plessy* ruling came 30 years after the abolition of slavery, the Jim Crow Era of racial discrimination, especially in the American South, was a type of slavery in which people of color still were not free to live as equal human beings. Looking only at the United States since its’ inception, about 80 percent of our history has been lived under legal white domination (slavery and Jim Crow). If we consider the *Brown* decision (1954) to be one of the factors leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, our nation has only been legally free for about 50 years. White supremacy continues to oppress the lives of people of color, so attention must be given to how it permeates throughout our political and social structure. The values and beliefs established under nearly incontestable white supremacy must be critically deconstructed as we actively engage in the transformation of these ideologies.

One of the factors bringing attention to America’s racial tensions was a 1944 social science investigation of the race problems in the United States by Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal. The study, titled *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, advocated an egalitarian approach and rejected racism by pointing out the contradiction between Jim Crow white supremacy and the United States as a world power. This external criticism really motivated the United States to deal with the racist issues interrupting the effective democratic functioning of the nation.

Moreover, it identified the “Negro problem” as a severe moral dilemma creating a destructive tension to the unity of the nation. The contradiction of values and practices, Myrdal argued, differed not only between people but existed even within the same person. In other words, there were American’s who wholeheartedly internalized the belief in “liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for everyone” yet could still be “violently prejudiced” against people of color (Martin 1998). Furthermore, Northern whites who disagreed with black discrimination – and even some black people themselves – had, in some sense or another, a “well-furnished compartment of race prejudice” though it may be suppressed (Martin 1998). Myrdal claimed there was no cultural unity holding American’s together; there were few values members could agree, on even some level, disrupting the democratic process altogether. Myrdal argued American’s needed “more general valuations – those which refer to man as such” to unify us in place of racist beliefs (Martin 1998). However, this claim is still problematic as it seeks universal ideals of personhood; although we should absolutely reject racism and sexism, unity should not be sought at the expense of difference.

The Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* trial lasted from 1952-1955 with the Brown I decision to reverse *Plessy v. Ferguson*’s “separate but equal” doctrine recorded on May 17, 1954. On May 31, 1955, the second part of the ruling, known as Brown II, determined desegregation be implemented “with all deliberate speed – this was the ambiguous compromise between immediatism and gradualism on which the Supreme Court settled. The appellants argued Jim Crow schools were unconstitutional because they denied children of color the right to equal protection of laws under the

Fourteenth Amendment. They used a variety of social science studies (including references to Myrdal's study) and findings as evidence to argue segregated schools were detrimental to children of color. According to the appellants, isolation and separation from other children caused children of color to consider themselves part of an inferior race, thus negatively affecting their motivation to learn and damaging their intellectual development. The denial of opportunity also affected their development as citizens by keeping them from learning how to interact with the rest of the population. The feeling of inferiority, they argued, resulted "in a personal insecurity, confusion and frustration that condemns him to an ineffective role as a citizen and member of society" (Martin 1998). They emphasized the nearly irreversible damage when such treatment begins to form the mentality of elementary-aged children. The value in appealing to the social sciences as evidence for the detrimental effects of segregation to *all* children emphasized the human aspect of enduring harsh conditions of inequality; furthermore, they were representing children who relied on the protection of adults. In sum, the appellants argued for the desegregation of schools because of the following detrimental effects between the races: 1) "a distorted sense of social reality," 2) "a blockage in the communications and interaction," and 3) "[the perpetuation of] rigid stereotypes and [reinforcement of] negative attitudes [which may lead to] violent outbreaks of racial tensions..." (Martin 1998).

Furthermore, some of the "self-destructive" reactions cited to such treatment were "anti-social and delinquent behavior," as well as "a generally defeatist attitude and a lowering of personal ambitions" that were reflected in "a lowering of pupil morale and

a depression of the educational aspiration level” (Martin 1998). Recognition of the lack of opportunity and availability for achievement or improvement of social status based on race could also lead to defeatism or cynicism among discriminated populations.

Appellants even included evidence undermining the fear of integration due to racial differences in intelligence citing the fear as “not well founded” (Martin 1998). A similar claim can be made on behalf of students of color today. Although segregation is illegal, most schools experience *de facto* racial segregation. This is a direct criticism of the vague wording of *Brown II* making the ruling somewhat ineffective. In addition, the damages of inequality begin at an even earlier age, as disadvantaged children do not often have the opportunity to attend pre-school.¹⁰ Developing defeatist and cynical attitudes truly dehumanize these students, especially when led to believe they have an equal opportunity for an education. The persistence of racially discriminatory and xenophobic attitudes present a jarring contradiction to students who are literally taught in their social studies curriculum that racial discrimination has been outlawed, though their experiences reveal rather different conclusions.

The second round of *Brown* consisted of the Supreme Court posing questions to both sides in an attempt to determine the original intent of the framers of the Fourteenth

¹⁰ Johnathan Kozol explains access to early childhood education and preschool is rare. Some affluent parents can afford to pay thousands of dollar of tuition for their 3-year old child to attend “Baby Ivies”. By the time students from both affluent and poor backgrounds attend public school, affluent students have 2-3 years of experience in academic environments while poor children have none. Poor students begin to fall behind academically, which can lower teachers’ expectations, and there are insufficient resources for low-performing students. When the time comes, all students have to take the same standardized tests and many of the unprepared, poor students will inevitably fail, falling even farther behind (Kozol 2005).

Amendment, as well as arguments for possible relief. As Martin explains in his introduction to the documents in round two, the notion of original intent is an integral feature to the judicial tradition “through its insistence on the original historical moment as the most reliable guide to constitutionality” which reveals an inclination towards conservative and de-contextualized political processes (Martin 1998). At this time, the government openly supported desegregation because “of the increasingly powerful understanding that Jim Crow was morally bankrupt, a political liability, and an international embarrassment” partially due to Myrdal’s publication (Martin 1998). Martin’s retelling hints that the government’s motivations to support the plight of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) seemed to be much more concerned with the nation’s political processes and consequent reputation than with the immorality of racial discrimination. The appellants argued that the original intent of Fourteenth Amendment was as a supplement to the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. They argued it emerged from the Radical Republicans in congress to “incorporate into our fundamental law the well-defined equalitarian principle of complete equality for all without regard to race or color” (Martin 1998). The appellees responded that although the Fourteenth Amendment does affirm that the “fundamental rights of life, liberty and property” be extended to people of color, it did not include the “right to mingle with other races in the public schools” thus arguing for the upholding of *Plessy* in the separation of races (Martin 1998). The Supreme Court concluded there was not enough evidence to determine the original intent of the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment. This political practice of trying to determine the original intent assumes

that written legislation contains the solutions for future problems and can lead to dogmatic interpretations. Our democracy should be understood as an evolving process contingent upon context. Despite being unable to conclusively determine the original intent of the framers, the Court decided the Fourteenth Amendment should be interpreted liberally "...to establish complete equality for Negroes in the enjoyment of fundamental human rights..." (Martin 1998).

On May 17, 1954 Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the final decision known as Brown I: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Martin 1998). Though Warren acknowledged the arguments of both sides and the difficulty in determining the original intent of legislators, he explained how the privatization of education in the South led to a practically nonexistent schooling system for students of color and subsequent illiteracy. By doing this, he legitimized the argument against states' rights as it led to inequality especially along the color line. Warren also identified how the notion of "equal" in the "separate but equal" doctrine was a tricky issue, one we seem to still struggle with in the present era of *de facto* segregation. Schools can be equalized according to "tangible" factors such as "buildings, curricula, qualifications and salaries of teachers" but in terms of segregation, the equal distribution of tangible factors did not undermine academic inequality. We face this very same issue with the notion of "equal" now as we can see in the language of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The major solution the act prescribes is focused on these types of tangible factors such as standardization of "high-quality" content, assessments, and educators in order to deal

with academic inequality. However, attention to these tangible factors did not adequately deal with the issue of racial segregation fifty years ago and it has not succeeded now either. The measures to improve educational opportunity for disadvantaged students continue to address these tangible factors while neglecting the structural and ideological issues at hand. Focusing on these tangible factors dehumanizes the teachers and students by neglecting to recognize their involvement with education as humans. The dominant discussion of funding and performance on assessments in educational policy has nothing to do with students learning, and our students can feel the tangible effects. Although programs, such as the now banned Mexican-American Studies, try to engage and motivate students in a way that recognizes their cultural history and identity in order to raise student achievement¹¹, they are eliminated by threatening to remove these tangible factors (i.e., funding) and criticized by the politicians for being “inappropriate” within the “democratic” education system.¹²

Chief Justice Earl Warren declared that “education is perhaps the most important function of the state and local governments”, echoing and aligning with the long tradition of education as a political tool to shape the citizens of a society before him. Specifying the function of education in American society, Warren recognized “the importance of education to our democratic society... [as] ... the very foundation of good citizenship.” Without the opportunity to education, he concludes, “it is doubtful that any

¹¹ For example, as will be discussed further in Chapter III, the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson USD succeeded in increasing graduation rates and passing AIMS exams.

¹² Alternatively, school districts have resorted to cheating in order to fulfill these evaluative requirements in order to receive tangible financial awards, for example the El Paso ISD cheating scandal discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life...” (Martin 1998). Critics of the legislation argued colored children were better off in segregated schools with teachers who could relate to them and their lived experience. They felt the legislation assumed colored educators were not capable of successfully running their schools and educating their students. The problem *Brown* addressed was not necessarily that all colored students did not have the opportunity to an education; rather it was distinguishing students based on race that led to “feelings of inferiority” (Martin 1998). Similarly, the present problem with educational inequity is not simply because the opportunity to an education does not exist for Latina/o students (though the language of NCLB proposes that “significant opportunity” in the way of funding will sufficiently address the issue). The problem Latina/o students face is they are not recognized as racially, linguistically, culturally diverse citizens and members of American society. Although the language in Warren’s statement alludes to a concern for the “hearts and minds” of the children, the more current No Child Left Behind Act does not in any way refer to the students as people.

Having overturned *Plessy*, the next decision left to be determined was the relief and remedy. As Martin explains, the Supreme Court openly showed their inclination towards the NAACP’s position so they were “paralyzed around how to rule on relief without creating a political furor, especially without unduly antagonizing Jim Crow’s supporters” (Martin 1998). Some critics believe the Court’s concerns with “antagonizing” the supporters of “morally bankrupt” legislation led to the ineffective and problematic compromise for integration with “all deliberate speed”. The appellants

advocated for immediate relief, while the appellee's advocated for gradual relief. Chief Justice Earl Warren declared in the *Brown II* for relief to "...enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases..." (Martin 1998). The ruling on relief was too ambiguous and too much of a compromise that the nation moved forward under the appearance of denying racial discrimination; because many have put up appearances of anti-racism and a severe denial of remaining tensions of inequity, current generations have a much more difficult fight ahead of them. One way to prepare current and future generations to effect the change they would like to see is through education. The supporters of integration and the black freedom struggle were keen to locate the schoolhouse as an important and significant place to begin this change.

There is a lesser known history of Mexican-American's legislative struggle for equal education and desegregation with several court cases preceding *Brown*. González explains the historical segregation of Mexican-Americans in education through the lens of Critical Race Theory in his article "The Ordinary-ness of Institutional Racism". In the Southwest, Latinas/os faced hateful racial intolerance and discrimination for being immigrants of color. By looking at the legal history of the Latina/o struggle for education, it is clear that people of color other than Blacks in the United States are also subjected to institutional racism. As González explains, institutional racism is woefully undemocratic and unjust because of the massive negative effect it has on people of color while benefiting the White population (González 2007, 331-345). The persistence of

institutional racism in the legislative process contradicts the purported democratic practices and aims of American society.

The Mexican-American community in the Southwest had been challenging school districts' practices restricting an equal opportunity for education since 1930. Mexican-American students were segregated according to linguistic attributes, last name, and race. In 1947, *de jure* school segregation came to an end in California with the *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County* (González 2007, 331-345). Though the Latina/o legal community had some success like the *Mendez* case¹³, the *Brown* decision did not necessarily provide them with relief. Latinas/os were not recognized as an ethnic group by the U.S. Census until the 1970 *Jose Cisneros et al. v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* case (González 2007, 331-345). Prior to this case, school officials categorized Latina/o students as "White" for purposes of integration under *Brown*'s order. In other words, it would appear on institutional records that White and Black students were attending integrated schools while in all actuality the schools kept White and students of colors segregated. As González explains, at the center of all these cases is the social construction and fluidity of race used to the benefit of Whites by reinforcing racial hierarchies (González 2007, 331-345).

From the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to No Child Left Behind

Before analyzing how educational policy (a fairly recent phenomenon) institutionalizes racism and perpetuates majoritarian stories of power and privilege, we

¹³ The arguments of which set the precedent for the arguments of plaintiffs in *Brown* (González 2007, 337)

must first trace the creation of educational policy in the United States. Even after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, access to education is not a constitutionally granted right.

However, *Brown* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did affect the federal government's involvement in educational concerns when it had previously been the responsibility of states. The first federal legislation concerning public education was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 enacted by the Johnson administration. The ESEA intended to provide compensatory financial support to schools serving traditionally disadvantaged students to enhance their educational experience. As Thomas and Brady point out, increased federal involvement in the education system has revealed some limitations of the techniques generally taken to address the challenges disadvantaged students face in their educational experience; more specifically, they argue accountability requirements in educational policy do not adequately take into account the variety of "complex issues involved in serving disadvantaged school children" (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). Indeed, the increased federal and state role has become of particular concern in the field of education. Especially for students of color, unilateral policy measures are consistently inadequate in meeting their diverse educational needs.

The general assumption underlying all educational policy since its' inception is that financial support can best address educational disadvantage. President Johnson's "War on Poverty" was linked to the administration's efforts to provide educational aid with a specific provision for the education of poor children. However, in 1965 school districts and schools across the nation received about \$1 billion dollars from the ESEA.

The question raised by Congress was whether compensatory aid established in Title I should be restricted to poor, educationally disadvantaged children or available to all children who were at risk of school failure, regardless of socioeconomic status (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). A key component to the ESEA was Title VII, also known as the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. The purpose of which was to recognize the distinct educational needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) and to provide financial support to implement programs designed to meet their needs (San Miguel 1984, 505-518). In May of 1970, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) sent out a memo to school districts serving more than 5 percent national origin minority group students forbidding them to classify them as “mentally retarded” or “low-ability” based on English fluency alone (San Miguel 1984, 505-518). *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) determined Chinese students in San Francisco were denied the right to an equal education because they were not provided with special language instruction (San Miguel 1984, 505-518). In response to this decision, the Lau Remedies in 1975 were released requiring school districts with 20 or more ELL students to “design extensive English acquisition programs” (Mavrogordato 2012, 455-467). There was a constant back and forth between federal and state officials as the former attempted to respect rights of the latter while monitoring for lax interpretations and implementations of policy.

As concerns over abuses of federal financial aid continued to emerge, Congress continued to reauthorize ESEA in attempts to specify the “congressional intent of assisting educationally disadvantaged students from low-income families” (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). The Reagan administration in the 1980s reauthorized the ESEA

cutting federal aid and significantly reducing the number of eligible students receiving compensatory services. In addition, more attention was brought to low academic performance prompting the setting of higher academic standards, more course requirements, longer school days, and more stringent standards for teacher qualifications (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). In 1988, Title I was rewritten to require accountability from schools and school districts through documentation of student achievement measured by standardized test scores. By 1994, modern reform was primarily concerned with standards-based education with the Clinton administration's release of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The legislation reoriented federal involvement by indicating a focus on student achievement levels, challenging academic standards which were applicable to all students, and dependence on testing to keep track of the effects of reform (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). In the same year, ESEA was once again reauthorized and renamed the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA); the stated purpose of which was "to provide opportunities for children served to acquire the knowledge and skills contained in the challenging State content standards and to meet the challenging State performance standards developed for all children" (Improving America's Schools Act [IASA], 1994). In order to keep schools and school districts accountable to these standards, schools that did not meet "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) needed to show steps were being taken to improve performance. In order to receive Title I funds, schools were required to document the ways in which they were providing equal goals, expectations and opportunities to all students.

Finally, we arrive at the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA by the Bush administration titled the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The persistent achievement gap between white and non-white students continued to grow despite increased federal involvement and financial support. Congress demanded even more accountability as they learned about the very high numbers of underqualified teachers in schools serving primarily students of color (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). In addition, NCLB replaced Title VII of the ESEA (Bilingual Education Act) with Title III “Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient Students.” As Mavrogordato argues, the legislation seems to strongly prefer English-only instruction as “The removal of the word ‘bilingual’ from Title III suggests that the administration sought to deemphasize the native language aspect of the Bilingual Education Act” (Mavrogordato 2012, 455-467). As will be discussed in the following chapter, unilateral implementation of standards and the classification of ELL and other students as “at-risk” is problematic especially for racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. Bureaucratic channels established through federal legislation distract educators who must be primarily concerned with navigating through the system, making teachers implicit contributors to institutional oppression and impeding the development of meaningful relationships with students.

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM OF CURRENT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Having laid out the historical aim of education, it is clear the originally intended audience was a homogenous population – namely white, male, and privileged – being trained to move into positions of power. However, racially diverse populations have resisted marginalization and pressure to assimilate by demanding a voice within the political sphere, especially claiming their right to an equal educational opportunity. Despite the heroic efforts of leaders of color to overcome *de jure* racism, the structure of policy and education was initially employed for racist agendas and *de facto* racism still remains.¹⁴ This chapter offers a critique of the problems in education – problems that, it must be acknowledged, are not new but need to be approached differently if we are to deviate from the exclusionary characteristics and functions the institution of education has inherited. Educators must sincerely engage the purpose of education and deconstruct the current understanding in light of a focus on funding, accountability, standards and performance measures. This chapter offers a critique defining the current practices as mis-education or *banking* education, arguing that the practices purported to compensate for societal inequality are in fact exacerbating it.

Education continues to have a generational effect, transmitting the values of a previous generation for the next to build upon. Our educational structure is necessarily

¹⁴ This is not to say Western historical thought is inherently racist; though it may be so, and there are certainly scholars who argue it is, it is not the purpose of this project.

oppressive because it is devoid of caring, denies the humanity of students, and stifles creativity (of both students and teachers). Although the mis-education pervasive in our schools is detrimental to all students because of its' oppressive nature, certain students (those for whom education was initially intended, i.e. white, male, privileged) still manage to survive the schooling system and succeed socioeconomically and politically upon completion. Their success, however, is defined according to the knowledge gained through an oppressive education and they become adults complicit in the oppressive structures of society. For this reason, if we wish to reform the oppressive nature of education we must focus on the experiences of oppressed students; specifically in terms of this project, the focus is on the mis-educative experience of Latina and Latino students within a *banking* education.

An Analysis of the No Child Left Behind Act

The stated objective of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is “To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2001). NCLB was drafted as the latest reiteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, reauthorized with changes and additions made to aid children with disabilities, English-language learners (ELL), female students, and Native American students. As Madeline Mavrogordato explains, educational equity policies since the early 20th Century have centralized American public education, on both federal and state levels (Mavrogordato 2012, 455-467). Although the right to education is not constitutionally granted, the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made the increasing need to secure equal opportunity

for traditionally oppressed students apparent. Not only has the federal government's role been strongly criticized, most of these changes and additions have been limited to allocations of funding focusing on the treatment of schools as bureaucratic entities within an economic market. As Thomas and Brady argue, increased federal involvement in public education has revealed limitations to the way the education system approaches and thinks about traditionally disadvantaged school children (Thomas and Brady 2005, 51-67). Increased federal involvement through these "protection policies" contribute to the impersonal, rationalized bureaucratic framework forced upon teachers who must, in turn, indoctrinate students into the framework. The damages I will be analyzing within this educational system are twofold: first, structural oppression (i.e., institutional racism) goes unchallenged and is even facilitated through bureaucratic channels; second, the impersonal and rationalized system leaves teachers ill-equipped to form the necessary meaningful relationships with their students, limiting their opportunity for a valuable learning experience.

Title I of NCLB outlines steps the federal government defines as necessary for "improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged". The title of this legislation reveals the indubitable problem of educational inequity for American students, identifying low-achieving "disadvantaged" students at the center of the issue. Although the act is indeed recognizing some students are left at a disadvantage, educational policy tends to identify blame on students' circumstances rather than taking a critical look at a system that reproduces disadvantage itself. The language of the act reveals the primary concern of policy-makers (in turn accepted by state politicians and educators) is to hold

students accountable for meeting proficiency on standards and assessments. Educational policy is firmly grounded in standard-based methods for improvement, as NCLB reiterates. The objectives of NCLB continue to include students' academic accountability, facilitating local educational control, providing improved teaching methods, providing parents with more choices, and (the most recent addition) a reliance on "research-based practices" to produce better results. Although the policy has incited a number of limitations and criticisms, the present concern is with the effects of an education system managed according to bureaucratic means and ends. It is dreadfully inappropriate to treat our students as products that must meet performance standards, like a vehicle or computer. Paulo Freire would call this construction of education an instance of the *banking* concept of education, which will be discussed further in a later section (Freire 2000). First, we must analyze the values inferred from the educational policy that translates into structural oppression within particular schools placing the bureaucratic burden on teachers, essentially barring the formation of meaningful relationships.

The language of NCLB reveals the dissonance between the purportedly democratic means and ends of the education system. Though the document appears to strive towards democratic ends such as equality, fairness, and choice, there is a dissonance between them and the prescriptive means, both in policy and in practice. As the federal government is trying to respect "local control" and states' rights, the language can be vague allowing each particular state to define the specific interventions, methods, and programs implemented to produce results. However, as we have learned

from the *Brown II* decision of desegregation “with all deliberate speed”, being too vague leaves sufficient room for the people in power at the state level to appear in compliance with federal legislation neglecting oppressed students from their “equal” opportunity. The drafters of NCLB seemed to have taken the meaning of “equality” within a democracy for granted. If we analyze the language within this document, the meaning of “equal” is understood as the standardization of rigorous content and advanced skills. In other words, the attempt to equalize opportunity becomes conflated with sameness; all students within a district, the state, and the nation are held accountable for their academic performance along the same measures and assessments. In 1965, the Supreme Court had to use the *Brown* decision to verify that “separate” is inherently unequal; the task we now face is to recognize in policies and practices that “equal” does not mean “same”. The democratic principle of equality is perhaps one of the most contentious discussions in the American legal system. The educational and political systems tend to think of equality as meaning “sameness” such that all people find themselves in similar situations and circumstances; clearly, this is a radically false notion. To approach the diverse needs of our students this way is paternalistic because it ignores the intersections of oppression experienced by differences in race, gender, and class. Although the reauthorizations of the NCLB has included legislation on how to deal with non-native English speakers, Native Americans, and students with disabilities, the policy’s objective is to equalize and unify at the expense of difference.

Another nebulous term in the language of NCLB is “significant opportunity”; this seems to be defined by the allocation of funding to support programs and parents’

choice for schools in the form of vouchers for charters, magnet programs, etc. when failing schools do not reach Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). By representing the opportunity NCLB provides as “significant” on part of the generous policy-makers and school systems, implies the “disadvantaged” students are at fault for not working hard enough to take advantage of the “significant opportunity”, rather than considering the persistent failure a function of an oppressive educational structure. The danger for a bureaucratic system of education to provide “disadvantaged” students with an “equal and significant opportunity” dehumanizes the individual students by essentializing their experience and treating them as objects to be acted upon.

In an attempt to redefine the notion of “equal opportunity”, Nel Noddings argues it must be understood as paying attention to the unique talents and interests of students (Noddings 2013). Although I agree providing our students with encouragement and attention would be incredibly beneficial, working within the bureaucratic system of education makes this problematic and an almost impossible task with which to burden teachers. Individualized attention of this sort, as we learned from Rousseau’s *Emile* and his tutor, is incredibly difficult and unlikely; there are not entirely enough teachers for the number of students who would require this attention. Furthermore, the rhetoric of individualized attention can oppressively impose paternalistic ideals as we saw happen during the Progressive Era with intelligence testing. If we are to provide our students with an equal opportunity by allowing them to express their talents and interests, teachers and students need to be able to develop a meaningful learning relationship. But within the *banking* concept or bureaucratic institutions there is no room for emotions and

care; without recognizing the humanity of our students, education can be neither significant nor equal.

Inferring how policy-makers understand fairness proves to be a more complicated task; it seems to be an umbrella term under which to couch “equal and significant opportunity”. Fairness is most like the democratic principle of justice. Like all the democratic values in questions, justice must be understood within a particular space and time. It is perhaps most clear to visualize the necessity of contextual definitions of values and principles rather than appeal to universal understanding when we remember that Plato raised this very same question over 2000 years ago. Plato’s notion of justice has surely informed Western musings of the term, but it is obviously no longer appropriate to consider justice as members of society staying in their place. Quite the contrary, our modern democracy is becoming increasingly concerned with matters of social justice and human dignity for all. Unfortunately, though NCLB purports to be championing social justice through compensatory policy for historically oppressed populations of students, the language used is a rhetorical tactic appearing to prioritize American and democratic values; fairness in our society is defined by merit (if you work hard enough for it, then you deserve it), equality assumes all individuals are the same and live the same experiences (as Western history shows, the standard is white, male, middle-class, Christian, English-speaking). The bureaucratization of education is built under traditionally standard values, thus the policies and practices federal and local governments espouse is woefully misguided.

Next, we turn the investigation to the term “high-quality” as it is used to define a standard for rigorous academic content and excellent teacher instruction. “High quality” teacher preparation, according to NCLB, is “aligned with challenging State academic standards... [in order to]...measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2001). Teachers find themselves in a strange bureaucratic middle ground in which they must both allow the system to define their pedagogy by measuring up to “challenging State academic standards” as well as being held accountable for their students’ academic performance. The subjects to which student’s performance will be measured on standardized tests are those traditionally considered to be “higher-order” subjects (i.e., math, science, and reading or language arts) along some sort of subject hierarchy. To be clear, literacy and mathematical acuity are exceptionally important skills to master, but focusing our efforts on the testing of these subjects restricts the ability to effectively develop them. Without making connections to other avenues of learning using literacy, science and math, they become stale, monotonous academic standards rather than tools to enable further learning.

Furthermore, to think of these skills simply as rungs on a ladder removes all the joy from curiosity and discovery by replacing it with an imperative to measure up according to state defined standards. The language of NCLB considers “high-quality” academic content to be that which “(I) specif[ies] what children are expected to know and able to do; (II) contain[s] coherent and rigorous content; and (III) encourage[s] the teaching of advanced skills” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2001). Once again, the

standards are determined by the assumption that all children develop and learn in the “same” way; and if children do not meet the dominantly defined standards then they are classified as low-achieving students, or in the words of the legislation they are considered “basic”. Anti-colonialist criticisms might explain the use of this term as a euphemism for “primitive”, which was used to describe non-white cultures, practices, and beliefs under Social Darwinist pretenses. Classification as “basic” means “failure” in terms of meeting performance standards. As students of color have consistently low performance of assessments and testing, the legislation is reinforcing paternalistic ideals that students and teachers themselves internalize and perpetuate. Furthermore, the repeated use “child” or “children” to refer to students also reflects a colonial, paternalistic approach to “disadvantaged” populations assuming their intellectual capacity is “primitive” and underdeveloped.

The significant prioritization of subjects such as math, science and English-language arts in education deserves some further analysis. When reading through this legislation, it shows what may be called a “proficient” mastery of language (though it comes off as convoluted, vague, rhetorical) and a trust in numerical measurements made through scientifically legitimate practices. Indeed, assessments are considered “high-quality” if they are analyzed through “measurable objectives” according to scientifically based practices legitimizing a focus on data and numbers by teachers and students alike. This goes to show the education policies are built around an indoctrination of students to fit into the bureaucratic system; but compliance and conformity is an oppressive restriction on all students, not just the “disadvantaged” this act purports to help. In other

words, despite federal educational reform we are still doing what we've been doing for the last century – at the very least for the last fifty years when the ESEA of 1965 was first authorized. But there is still inequity, there is still segregation, there is still a lack of imagination and creativity¹⁵.

Finally, the legislation's definition of "at-risk" students merits some attention.

Part D of Title I in No Child Left Behind provides the following categorization:

"The term 'at-risk', when used with respect to a child, youth, or student, means a school-aged individual who is at-risk of academic failure, has drug or alcohol problem, is pregnant or is a parent, has come into contact with the juvenile justice system in the past, is at least 1 year behind the expected grade level for the age of the individual, has limited English proficiency, is a gang member, has dropped out of school in the past, or has a high absenteeism rate at school" (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2001).

First, it is ineffective and problematic to lump so many issues students face under one term and directly link it to academic failure; the use of the word "failure" can be internalized by policy-makers, educators, parents, and students alike. Lumping all of these issues together reveals the policy-makers do not recognize the students as individuals facing unique challenges; unilateral policies and universal standards are surely not going to fit all of these situations, much less solve them. For example, a possible solution for pregnancy and young parents is more sexual education, rather than drilling students with rigorous academic content. States with the highest teen pregnancy rate tend to be those whose state legislature follows dominant and conservative Christian values, negating the importance of sexual education for girls and boys. Furthermore, this

¹⁵ Though not a complete absence because some students and teachers seek it and try to use it, but are stopped short by the bureaucratic structure of schooling.

information about students is only beneficial when teachers have formed a meaningful relationship with their student. Otherwise, the teacher is in danger of projecting his or her own conception of what the student's lived experience might be; this is truly oppressive and dehumanizing to the students because they are not seen for who they are but are considered a liability for failure under Title I, Subpart 3, Section 1432 of the No Child Left Behind Act. Legislation such as NCLB removes a concern for an individual person to a classification of "at-risk". In light of institutional maintenance of power and domination, it is perhaps more accurate to understand the risk in "at-risk" as not focused on the student's well-being, rather on the risk they pose to the status quo. Overall, the language of this legislation does not send the message there is a particular concern for students as persons. The standards are narrow and restrict creativity by assuming there is one way to learn and one type of valuable knowledge to possess.

Social Reproduction and Racialized Oppression

Increased centralization, both at the federal and state level, of the education system is forcing education into a bureaucratic pigeonhole. It is too difficult to deal with structural issues from within the system itself; there are too many barriers built into it and so many entities involved that straying or challenging large components will be resisted and rejected. Perhaps we can begin with teacher education by seriously confronting the systematic oppression of society. As a country that believes in the free expression of citizens, we should not overstep boundaries by concealing and altering the truth of our history of discrimination. Although educators should be sensitive to the sensibilities of students of all ages and not teach them something in a manner they can't

handle, teachers should simultaneously help students develop the tools to facilitate their learning. In other words, we must help our students develop a critical consciousness so they can deal with our sometimes shocking and horrendous past.

The sociological theories of education from Pierre Bourdieu and Max Weber provide an interesting lens through which to analyze the current American education system. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and Weber's bureaucratic theory illustrate an accurate depiction of the current approach and practice of education. Education has been increasingly bureaucratized and centralized since the rise of industrialization as a method to efficiently manage modern mass schooling. Somewhat similar to other educational theorists before him, Bourdieu argued education functioned to reproduce the structure of class relations by the "hereditary transmission of power and privileges" (Bourdieu 1973, 71-84). He explained the process of education as a tool for accumulating *habitus* (and cultural capital), which are tacitly embedded dispositions and habitual behaviors in order to reproduce the appropriate agents to uphold the current structure of relations. The accumulation and redistribution of cultural capital is theoretically accessible by everyone within the education system, however power and privilege is often concealed in order for "a limited category of individuals, carefully selected and modified" to maintain possession (Bourdieu 1973, 71-84). In other words, teachers tend to be possessors of white, middle-class *habitus*, and reward students who display this socially accepted (though narrowly defined) behavior. If a child happened to be born into an affluent family, he may learn the physical, intellectual and moral values respective of his status from the home, but these traits and values are reinforced

within the institutions of education. On the other hand, a poor child who has only developed the *habitus* of a lower social class is neglected and ignored by teachers which robs the student of an equal education while simultaneously reinforcing the hierarchies of social class.

Due to the history of racial discrimination however, the social class distinction made by those in power overwhelmingly aligns across racial lines. In *The Miseducation of the Negro* Carter G. Woodson writes about this social reproduction phenomenon within Black families: “Negroes, then, learned from their oppressors to say to their children that there were certain spheres into which they should not go because they would have no chance therein for development” (Woodson 2000). As Woodson explains in his text, although slavery had been abolished for several decades the social customs and attitudes of both Blacks and Whites were slow to change. Surely, it is harder to change people’s hearts than to influence their actions through legislation, but the remnant oppression within institutions – such as education – perpetuate attitudes of superiority and inferiority among peoples. Though we cannot generalize the Black experience to speak for the experience of all oppressed racial minority groups in the United States, we can certainly see a trend in the structural imposition of domination.

Weber’s bureaucratic theory sheds light on the massification of public schooling, further institutionalizing oppression into a process that is “unsentimental, arbitrary, rule-bound, inhuman, and abusive of power” (Waters 2012). A bureaucratic education manages in a similar fashion to a manufacturing system; children are “raw material” spending roughly 12-13 years in a process reproducing an adult to take their place in

higher education, the job market, or the military (Waters 2012).¹⁶ Within the highly dehumanizing bureaucratic system, teachers become “bureaucratic officials” who facilitate this process of social reproduction. A critical part of being an educator is forming a caring relationship; in terms of social reproduction, Waters explains teachers are responsible for transferring the “hopes and dreams of the older generation to the younger one” (Waters 2012). As Waters points out, teachers find themselves in an incredibly paradoxical position as their task is inherently sentimental but they have to work within an oppressively dehumanizing bureaucratic system. Paulo Freire refers to this dehumanizing education as the *banking* concept of education.

Freire criticized the method of education as being a major contributor of oppression by adhering to what he called the *banking* concept of education, particularly when it came to the relationship between teachers and students. Education, Freire explained, was “suffering from narration sickness”; the relationship was characteristically “narrative”, meaning the Subject-teacher acts upon objects-students (Freire 2000). Drawing from the analogy of a bank, teachers deposit content into students who are treated as empty receptacles waiting to be filled (Freire 2000). The students are expected to passively receive, file, and store these deposits. However, the content of the deposits are completely alien to the experience of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students; indeed the bureaucratic process explained by Weber is in itself alienating. In addition, by assuming students are culturally, intellectually,

¹⁶ This tripartite division is reminiscent of Plato’s three classes, Gold, Silver, and Bronze -- the guardians, the military, and producers respectively. This similarity reveals how deeply rooted in our history and institutions these ideologies of power remain.

linguistically “empty” further objectifies and dehumanizes them. Freire speaks of the dull process of depositing information as repressing the creative powers of students, reinforcing the status quo by restricting the development of a critical consciousness. The *banking* process of education is considered to be more successful “the more completely [the teacher] fills the receptacles... [and]...the more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled” (Freire 2000). A connection can be made between the *banking* concept to the NCLB in terms of current measures of success, such as standardized content, scientifically based practices and assessments; the more units of content the teachers covers and the higher the student test scores, the better – regardless of depth of understanding, personal development, or consciousness raising. Drawing once again from Woodson’s critique of mis-education, he writes: “In our time too many Negroes go to school to memorize certain facts to pass examinations for jobs. After they obtain these positions they pay little attention to humanity” (Woodson 2000). Or in Freire’s words: “Verbalistic lessons, reading requirements, the methods for evaluating ‘knowledge’, the distance between the teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking” (Freire 2000). Both Woodson and Freire discuss the disinterestedness and lack of creativity in matters of learning to emphasize the efficiency of a bureaucratic education to oppress and maintain the structures of power.

Within this bureaucratic system of education, the relationship between teachers and students cannot be meaningful and caring. In Freire’s *banking* concept, the relationship is inherently dehumanizing as the students are treated as empty objects,

without agency or creativity. Educators of the oppressed are unfamiliar with the lives of their students; perhaps they are not interested, perhaps it does not even occur to them their lives are inherently valuable. Other times, educators can be pawns of the system, what Weber calls “bureaucratic officials, “sub-oppressors” oppressors according to Freire, and “mis-educated teachers” according to Woodson. These teachers do not necessarily find themselves among the ranks of the elite or those in power, so they are not oppressors per se but they have been educated and indoctrinated into the mentality of the oppressors. As Freire explains, in their striving for liberation the only model of humanity is that of an oppressor, and these *bank-clerk* teachers are not aware they are being used by the system to perpetually dehumanize (Freire 2000). According to Woodson the content of the miseducation is built upon Caucasian prejudices, thus “a Negro teacher instructing Negro children is in many respects a white teacher...” (Woodson 2000).

In a word, both Freire and Woodson’s concerns remind us that teaching is generally considered a middle-class profession and there is a growing diversity gap between teachers and their students. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics of 2011, 45% of K-12 students were culturally and linguistically diverse while 83% of teachers are White (Sleeter 2014). Such a wide dissonance in demographics between teachers and students reveals the level of institutional racism within the profession, but also complicates the educational experience of oppressed students. White, middle-class teachers are often not aware of (or deny) their own privilege, creating a distance between them and their “disadvantaged” students, to use

the language of NCLB.¹⁷ The immediate categorization of students as “disadvantaged” and “at-risk” provides grounds for teachers to make (often stereotypical) assumptions about their students; with these paternalistic assumptions about their circumstances, teachers deny their students’ humanity. Thus, the dehumanizing divide between teachers and students is not only due to the bureaucratic imposition of federal policy, but the difference (and denial) of privilege exacerbates the Subject-object relationship Freire illustrates in the *banking* concept.

The Latina and Latino Experience: Critical Counterstories

The cultural divide between teachers and students is a major contributor to the persistence in low-achieving minority students. As the current analysis is concerned with educational inequity due to institutional racism and the dehumanization according to a bureaucratic framework, counterstorytelling offers an appropriate method to humanize the research. Tara Yosso utilizes counterstorytelling informed by a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework in order to “examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly shape social structures, practices, and discourses” such as the “inadequate educational conditions limit[ing] access and opportunities in Chicana/o schooling” (Yosso 2006). CRT scholarship is founded upon an understanding that racism is a socially constructed mechanism endemic (and permanent) within the

¹⁷ NCLB does not offer a clear definition of “disadvantaged” though usually includes the conditional “economically disadvantaged”. In the Statement of Purpose of Title I (Sec.1001), the students whose educational needs must be met (and can generally be categorized as “disadvantaged”) are “low-achieving children in our Nation’s highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act, 2001).

structures, practices and discourses within U.S. society. CRT seeks to understand the intersections of subordination such as race, gender, class, immigration status, language, etc. Specific to an analysis of the educational institution, CRT offers critical race praxis to challenge the dominant ideologies which claim the education system offers “equal, fair, and significant opportunity” to all students regardless of race. Critical counterstorytelling is central in challenging and analyzing oppressive institutions (education) and relationships (teacher-student relationships). CRT is committed to social justice and the transformation of a racist society, in this case the institution of education; CRT acknowledges “schools as political places and teaching as a political act” (Yosso 2006). Counterstories offer the experience from the perspectives of students of color to challenge and raise awareness about the realities of social and racial injustices by specifically countering majoritarian stories (in the present case, NCLB) that perpetuate racism and White privilege. Finally, critical counterstories serve not only to give a voice to students of color who often go unheard, but also allows the author to include her own experiences in her work to utilize academic scholarship to facilitate an honest discussion about “real-world problems” within communities of color (quoting Richard Delgado, Yosso 2006).

Subtractive Schooling

Angela Valenzuela’s *Subtractive Schooling* provides a multitude of critical counterstories illustrating particular examples of the oppressive educational system effecting failed, and truly damaging, teacher-student relationships. Valenzuela’s ethnographic study of Seguin High School (a pseudonym) in Houston, Texas provides a

tangible illustration of the alienating experiences lived by Latina/o students in the school system. Valenzuela argues Latina/o students resist public schooling simply because it does not suit their needs. She defines the school system as “subtractive” because it “divests [Mexican-American and immigrant youth] of important social and cultural resources leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (Valenzuela 1999). After three years of interviews and observation at Seguin in the early 1990s, Valenzuela discovers it is not education they oppose but *schooling*, i.e., the structure of their education.

To illustrate the diversity gap between teachers and students, Seguin served a low socioeconomic, predominantly Latina/o neighborhood but the majority of teachers and administrators were White. The schooling process, Valenzuela explains, was designed for White, middle-class students delivered by White, middle-class teachers and administrators. Thus, there was an inevitable clash between culturally diverse students and the narrowly defined schooling process. The theme recurring in the students’ complaints about their school was a severe lack of *caring*: students felt disrespected by teachers, administrators, and counselors. Students felt that school personnel were not concerned with whom they were as whole persons; they felt judged solely on their appearance. Oftentimes, students felt school personnel’s concern was misplaced in aesthetics rather than their actual education. Valenzuela illustrates an encounter she witnessed between a student, Laura, and the assistant principal because they did not approve of her attire and told Laura to go home to change. Laura was incredibly upset,

resisting the importance of appearance when her purpose at Seguin was to get an education:

“What! Are you crazy? What does what I wear have to do with anything? I live alone. I work for my money. And not even my parents tell me what to do or wear. And you’re telling me that what I’ve got on isn’t good enough? I don’t bother anyone when I go to class. I go to class to learn! School should be about me learning and not about what I wear! This is bullshit!” (Valenzuela 1999)

Teachers and administrators, on the other hand, believed students were the ones who lacked caring, perceiving students’ academic failure to be a cause of a lack of care and motivation for their own education. Quite the contrary however, Mexican-American and Mexican immigrant students proved to care very much about their education, as captured in the unique cultural notion of *educación*. As Valenzuela reports,

“*Educación* thus represents both means and an end, such that the end-state of being *bien educado/a* is accomplished through a process characterized by respectful relations. Conversely, a person who is *mal educado* is deemed disrespectful and inadequately oriented towards others” (Valenzuela 1999).

When this conception of education sought by the students is rejected by educators and the schooling process, the motivational force driving students is negated and devalued. Generally, students respond to uncaring teachers by appearing to not care themselves – a resistance “not to education, but to the irrelevant, uncaring, and controlling aspects of schooling” (Valenzuela 1999).

Valenzuela shares a conversation with Elvia, a student who was dropping out of school because of too many absences. Elvia’s parents were migrant laborers and brought Elvia with them as an infant, allowing her to attend American schooling. Elvia explained to Valenzuela that she once enjoyed school, but found it rather boring as of late: “I just

can't get into my classes this year. They're all so boring and no one seems to care if I show up...It's like all our teachers have given up and they don't want to teach us no more...If the *school* doesn't care about my learning why should *I* care?..." (Valenzuela 1999). Elvia planned to drop out of Seguin and complete her GED so she could then enroll in community college – an increasingly common strategy Valenzuela encountered among students in Houston ISD (Valenzuela 1999).

Drawing from Nel Noddings' ethic of caring, Valenzuela defines the educators' and schooling's failure to address the needs of the students as *aesthetic caring*; in other words, schools prioritize attention to the technicality of things and ideas over an expressive, sensitive approach to difference (Valenzuela 1999). Such an impersonal approach to education devalues the experiences of students and reduces their chances of succeeding academically. To counter *aesthetic caring*, Valenzuela offers an *authentic caring* approach to education implementing "pedagogical preoccupations with questions of otherness, difference, and power that reside within the assimilation process" (Valenzuela 1999). The assimilationist curriculum is particularly harmful to students of bilingual education because it aims to transition students into an English only curriculum. Assumptions undergirding elimination of students' bilingualism towards English as the dominant language are that "there is no value in bilingualism, biculturalism, or fluency in culture other than English, [and] fluency in any language except English interferes with education, or at least does not contribute to education in any meaningful way" (Valenzuela 1999). Educational policy has generally be intolerant of the development of bilingualism and prefers students be transitioned into English-only

content. Although research shows academic development in one's first language more effectively supports the development of a second language, early-exit models of bilingual education continue to be preferred by the educational system (Rosado, Lara, and Research and Education Association 2012).

As Valenzuela states, the schooling process is subtractive for Mexican and Mexican-American youth in part because of the insensitivity to identity. They are frequently reminded that English proficiency is of primary importance and Spanish is a barrier keeping them from academic success. However, at home, parents who may be predominantly Spanish-speakers encourage their children to practice and maintain their mother tongue. Parents generally recognize the utility in English fluency, so they encourage bilingualism. The schools however, do not provide any legitimate or advanced study in Spanish for native, active, or passive speakers. Annalisa, a student in a class Valenzuela observed, shares a story illustrating the tension with bilingualism and biculturalism. After visiting family in Mexico, Annalisa's cousins made her feel like an outsider because she did not speak Spanish very well and accused her of being *agringada*, or an Americanized "white woman" (Valenzuela 1999). Although she was among family and culturally closer to her roots as opposed to her minority status in the U.S., her cousins made her feel like she was not Mexican. An identity crisis is apparent when she realizes that her *Mexicanidad* is not respected or legitimated in America either. U.S.-born youth find themselves in this uncomfortable, confusing limbo and have trouble balancing the two; they often feel they belong neither here nor there. Before Annalisa visited family in Mexico, she may have related closely to her Mexican roots

and culture. After her visit, it seemed her Mexican family did not want to claim her. Moreover, as her experience within the schooling process and other U.S. institutions informed her, she is not quite “American” either because of her appearance and ability to speak Spanish.

Valenzuela found that female students in particular were typically high-achieving and purveyors of social capital (Valenzuela 1999). The female students she observed provided social capital to their male friends and boyfriends often by being supportive, motivational forces; in some cases this meant exploiting girls’ work ethic and cultural values, e.g., doing her boyfriend’s homework. Valenzuela describes this particular gender-defined characteristic of social capital as a “culture of romance” in which “the construction of female identity in traditional terms invariably translates into compromises women...make to secure the love and affection of a male” (Valenzuela 1999). One particular student would do her boyfriend’s homework (at the expense of her own grades) because he had a job and didn’t “have time” to do it himself. The young woman was convinced what she was doing needed to be done to help her boyfriend learn while maintaining a job. Valenzuela claims this particular “nurturing” trend seems to reveal the belief that a male’s time is more valuable than that of female students. Another instance of this nurturing trend in the Mexican culture in general is found in a mother encouraging her son to spend more time with a young woman who was a positive influence; as Valenzuela comments: “From one woman’s arms to another” (Valenzuela 1999).

In sum, Valenzuela's ethnographic study shines the light on some of the failures in the education system and organization within a particular school. She identifies aesthetic caring to be at the root of the tense relationships between school personnel and students, and the schools overall low academic performance. Nonetheless, there are a small number of teachers who constantly engage in an authentically caring pedagogy in order to meet their students' needs. Perhaps the greatest support one could offer for the implementation of authentic caring in schooling is the basic human need for acceptance, respect and care.

Raza Studies

Despite the grim picture *Subtractive Schooling* paints, there are certainly educators who authentically care about their students, their education, and their learning experience. The Mexican-American Studies (MAS), also Raza Studies, program in Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) is a contemporary example of both teacher resistance to the alienating curriculum imposed upon students and a contentious example of "solidaristic civic education" (Levinson 2012). The MAS program, banned by the TUSD school board in 2012, also reveals how majoritarian stories justify and perpetuate White privilege by "silenc[ing] or dismiss[ing] people who offer evidence contradicting these racially unbalanced portrayals" (Yosso 2006).

Mexican American Studies was eliminated by TUSD school board because the state passed House Bill 2281 allowing the superintendent to withhold 10% of state funding if a district offered classes that 1) advocate ethnic solidarity rather than treat pupils as individuals, 2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people, 3) are

designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, or 4) promote the overthrow of the U.S. government (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118 quoting Prohibited Courses and Classes, 2010). Despite never attending or auditing the courses, Superintendent Tom Horne found the MAS classes in violation of HB 2281 and called for the elimination of the program. Some of the questions surrounding this controversy included: “To what extent can a non-Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy be sanctioned as ‘legitimate education’? Additionally, can critical approaches to oppression be part of public secondary education?” (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118) Frequently, the impacts of the program on student achievement got lost in the racial politics though all sides of the discussion seemed to agree student achievement *should* be main focus of the debate. Advocates of the MAS program argued their approach (Critically Compassionate Intellectualism) was aimed at student achievement as well as “developing students as educated, critically engaged citizens who are committed to transforming oppression within their communities” (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118).

The MAS program was developed in response to the NCLB mandate to reduce the White/Latina/o achievement gap. Dr. Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero (appointed by TUSD’s superintendent Dr. Becky Montañó in 2002) selected low-performing students to engage in participatory action research intending to “develop in them a sense of empowerment by encouraging them to be social change agents” (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). After 16 of the initial 17 participants graduated, the program grew by adding courses but also expanding to other schools. By the 2005-2006 school year, the program had taken on the name of Mexican American Studies and was

offered by four schools in TUSD. Participation in the program was voluntary and around one-fifth of students in all schools took at least one MAS course (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118).

Raza studies allowed students to see their experiences reflected in their curriculum, which increased student engagement and subsequently higher achievement. As the pedagogical approach of MAS drew from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it included the celebration of "racial/ethnic difference [and] positive identity development [while] also examining, critiquing, and fighting systemic oppression" (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). For the oppressed who find themselves without educational opportunity, alienated from the institution claiming to promise them a "fair, equal and significant opportunity", Raza Studies offered an actual solution; the program provided students with a way to articulate the difficulties they faced while recognizing their own agency to transform their reality, just like the student activists before them during the Civil Rights and anti-war movements on the 1960s. Ethnic studies programs, as Christine Sleeter points out, are consistently characterized by the following five characteristics: 1) explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective (positionality of one's reality and how they got to be there); 2) examination of U.S. colonial history, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out; 3) examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation; 4) probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold; and 5) studying one's community's creative and intellectual products, both

historic and contemporary (recognizing creative faculties and agency) (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118).

Under the framework of Critically Compassionate Intellectualism, MAS teacher's helped students "develop the critical consciousness of the students, make meaningful connections with students and their families, push students to see themselves as intellectuals, and help students become agents of change" (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). The point of the MAS program was to do something different from the norm (as the norm obviously was not working for these students), drawing from Freire's concept of *conscientização*: "the combination of critical consciousness, self-reflection, and engaging in anti-oppressive, collective action" (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). By learning to read the word and the world, understanding their historical location, recognizing their agency in affecting social change, developing praxis (reflection and subsequent action, continually repeated) and being critically reflective (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). Educators adopted the concept of *authentic caring* as a commitment to the belief that "the material, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of youth...guide the education process" (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118, quoting Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling*). MAS took student-centered education to a whole new level concerned with the student herself, but also her lived experience including her family and community. In authentically caring for their (specifically) marginalized students, educators required student engagement with the structures of oppression and how students experienced them in their own lives, viewing students as creative agents who brought with them "funds of knowledge" from their lives beyond the classroom

(Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). MAS curriculum also included aspects of Critical Race Theory which calls for an active critique of race and racism, as well as intersectional oppression such as sexism, linguistic elitism, and immigration status. The program's intention was to increase student engagement, performance on standardized tests, and high school graduation. This focus is a significant deviation from Freire and CRT because these measures are typically considered oppressive in and of themselves. However, MAS educators and curriculum did not place all the importance in successful completion of standardized metrics in a way that defined the students or their self-worth. The assessments and performance standards had a cursory importance as a hurdle they needed to jump in order to overcome the oppressive schooling system, rather than dropping out and being left feeling powerless and defeated. By overcoming the system consistently pushing students out of school, subtracting from their intellectual and creative selves, MAS educators and curriculum was committed to developing them as persons who could pursue social transformation.

The intolerance of politicians, primarily White politicians, towards a celebration of difference comes from a fear of losing one's privileged position of power and dominance. Like former Superintendent Tom Horne, their minds and hearts are so closed off to the notion of white privilege, the suggestion of an alternative reality makes them afraid and they react with spite, further silencing the voices they already oppress. Horne even appropriates the language of social justice to tell a majoritarian story in order to justify his position; he claims to have been present at MLK's March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, but in doing so denies a celebration of difference and advocates

colorblindness (Horne 2007). The schools offering MAS served a majority Latina/o student population. Students in the program also tended to be mostly Latina/o and were typically of lower income backgrounds compared to non-MAS students. Though participation in the program was voluntary, MAS students tended to be low performing students prior to participation and were more likely to be English language learners (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). Cabrera et al.'s study revealed that taking more than one MAS course significantly increased probability of graduation, as well as passing the retake of AIMS (Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards) standardized test (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118). In addition, the more classes students took the better students performed academically. As the researchers found, although MAS students had lower 9th and 10th grade GPAs (before they could participate in MAS) compared to their non-MAS peers, they outperformed their non-MAS peers in passing the AIMS test and graduation rates (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1084-1118).

Cabrera et al. concluded that ethnic studies indeed lead to increased student development. Since the program served mostly oppressed (Latina/o, low income background) and lower performing students, elimination of the program further represses an already disadvantaged community. The political rhetoric and politicians' assumptions of the MAS program and its' students provides a very clear instance of the oppressive structure of schooling and should serve as a call to action for students, educators, researchers, and politicians alike.

Personal Counterstories

A final example of the abuse and exploitation within the education system comes from my hometown, El Paso, Texas. In 2011, Superintendent Lorenzo Garcia was indicted for committing fraud and reporting false test scores (Sanchez 2013). The entire well-being of these students, including their academic performance, was woefully subordinate to measures on high-stakes standardized testing. Through a fraudulent system of intimidation and reward, district officials and school administrators robbed “at-risk” students (i.e., English Language Learners and low achievers) of their humanity at a low-performing high school, so the school could fulfill the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act. According to an investigative report conducted by a local law firm, Superintendent Garcia’s “Bowie Plan” (named after the affected high school) involved “denying students access to an education through intimidation and stalling tactics, manipulating student records to prevent targeted students from taking the 10th grade TAKS [the state sanctioned standardized test at the time], and finally manufacturing credits in order to graduate students” (Safi 2013). These tactics were implemented in order to produce acceptable performance measures as mandated by state and federal accountability requirements. Garcia and other co-conspirators made substantial financial gains from their fraudulent methods at the expense of Mexican students, many of whom were recent immigrants lacking a solid grasp of the English language and the American school culture to defend themselves. U.S. Representative Beto O’Rourke filed a complaint for a civil rights investigation on behalf of the Office of Civil Rights (a branch of the Department of

Education) but it was denied because the complaint was not filed “within 180 days of the alleged act of discrimination” (Delisle and Lhamon 2013). Once again, we see bureaucratic channels taking precedence to the lives of actual students and negating the legitimacy of their oppressed experience.

One way to avoid imposition and exploitation is for students of color who have overcome educational inequity and recognize the injustices of the system to commit themselves as educators, policy-makers, and activists in the fight towards educational equality. Teachers of color can effectively observe the reactions of students to the alienating education and relate to the experiences of the students by drawing from their own experiences. Teachers must be active as educators and community members who believe in the need for educational equality, who understand and are sensitive to historical (and present) oppressive conditions of disadvantaged students. I aspire to be one of these educators of color who “returns to the cave”, so to speak, by re-immersing myself in the education system to learn from the students (complemented with my own experience as a student) in order to affect positive change. I am particularly concerned with the detrimental effects of the educational crisis for Latina/o students because of my own lived experience as a Latina and product of public education in El Paso, a West Texas border city with a majority Latina/o population. Although attending college was an expectation my parents worked hard to cultivate in my sisters and me, this was not the case for many of my cousins, friends, and fellow schoolmates. My college career took place at a private university in a Central Texas city also with a large Latina/o presence, both on campus and throughout the city. Although I was consistently a high-achieving

student in my K-12 education, I was not challenged or exposed to different realms of learning I longed for. I soon realized my public school experience was inadequate preparation for success in higher education; the public school curriculum did not cultivate the *conscientização* I needed to achieve the education I desired. Many of my peers found they were also unprepared for higher education as we all struggled to keep afloat; though a few of us managed to succeed in completing our degree, those who dropped out did not go unnoticed.

It was not until the final year of college I realized my insatiable desire for learning was actually a passion for education. The year following my college career was committed to national service with a federal volunteer corps dedicated to bridging the educational gap between educators and students. From my own experience, I was aware the educational system suffered from inadequacies but it was not until this year of service I began to experience the inadequacies from a position other than a student. As a full-time, in-class tutor and mentor in a majority Latina/o and Black middle school, I was privy to the challenges and demands the teachers were facing while also staying closely involved with the struggles of the students. During this year, many of the inadequacies of the education system came to light; I was able to see how the crisis affected students and parents, communities, teachers, and administrators on many different levels including curriculum and instruction, common academic standards, funding, racial segregation, low socioeconomic status, cultural incompetence, etc. Although it was impossible to learn and understand all the difficulties involved with education in that one year, the service experience succeeded in revealing a path I could

pursue as a Latina citizen with a passion for educational equality. I felt compelled to actively contribute to transforming the educational experience of students of color. I want them to discover for themselves, as I have, there is so much more possibility than to what they are exposed. The following chapter will propose a more inclusive pedagogy for educators who genuinely care about their students and wish to adequately serve them through solidarity and recognition of their humanity towards a liberating transformation.

CHAPTER IV

CONSIDERING A MORE INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

The educational experience for students of color within and outside of school is utterly inadequate. Although educational means and ends will continue changing, educators should be especially committed to critically and seriously engaging with the challenges their students face. We cannot keep denying the inequalities pervasive in our society in hopes they will just disappear. Conversations about power, privilege, and racial bias must take place in a variety of spaces involving diverse voices, but especially those who have been silenced. Although it is true our society no longer faces unapologetic *de jure* racial segregation and bias it did sixty years ago, we cannot yet claim we have overcome our racist and sexist past. Education not only reveals how bias has continued to harm an entire society through its' generational effect; it because of the critical causal relationship with the political sphere that education is an appropriate space from which to combat structural racial inequalities.

Latina and Latino students have been pushed out of high school, kept out of the college track, are faced with stereotypes impeding their academic performance, and taught their culturally diverse identities undermine or are wholly separate from their academic identities. The accumulated imposition of dominant ideologies within the educational and political system is a major obstacle for Latinas and Latinos; however, educators can be incredibly supportive in helping students challenge their subordinate position. Although teachers themselves have been mis-educated and work within the

banking system of education, many are sympathetic to the oppression their students live and seek to help them compensate for disadvantage. In order to help students of color survive oppressive *banking* education, educators must redraw the lines of the educational conversation.

Though it may seem like a humble approach, a revolution that wishes to overcome this oppressive system must take a bottom-up approach and be motivated by love for humanity and for the oppressed. One of the most harmful features of *banking* education for Latina and Latino students' is a severe lack of meaningful student-teacher relationships due to institutional racial bias imposed by the bureaucratic system of *banking* education. *Banking* education necessarily means educators only practice false love, thus it is necessarily oppressive because students are treated like abstract categories; i.e., the primary concerns are with performance measures and meeting mandated standards in order to receive federal funding. If educators are to move away from mis-education, their pedagogy must be informed by humanity, liberation, and an ethic of care. These educators – or revolutionary educators, to use Freire's term – must courageously enter into genuine dialogue with their oppressed students who will then undertake their own education, generating knowledge that is necessarily liberating because it is created out of resistance to oppressive *banking* education.

The meaning and aim of education for oppressed populations needs to be redrawn by these revolutionary educators through their pedagogy drawing from the philosophies behind the frameworks offered by Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire, and Nel Noddings. Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and Nel Noddings' feminine approach to

caring offer an overlap worth exploring: Freire offers a sophisticated approach to structural oppression and a humanistic imperative for the liberation of all, while Noddings' attention to the caring relationships between teachers and students complements Freire's pedagogy by offering a practical way for educators to move from mis-educators to revolutionary educators. Although both Freire and Noddings passionately discuss the ethical imperative of a more humanizing, liberating education, Maria Montessori's deep reverence for the child inspires love of life through a critical and respectful commitment to children. If we, as educators, can learn to genuinely love and care for our students and through them learn to love the world, our students will also learn to genuinely care for each other and will be empowered to creatively transform oppressive structural inequality.

Maria Montessori's Reverence for the Child

Admittedly, reform to the structure of education is a lofty undertaking and the scope is much too wide for this project to pursue. However, a good place to start is developing a respect for all humans by developing reverence for the child. Though it is imperative we treat all children with the deep respect they deserve, it is particularly important to realize what this responsibility means within the field of education. Maria Montessori offers a particularly inspiring respect for the life of a child. Montessori was an Italian physician and creator of the Montessori Method, which places great emphasis on independence, freedom and a unique reverence for the recognition of the child as the origin and hope of humanity. Moreover, Montessori realized the incredible significance of her work when she opened a school for very poor children with illiterate parents.

Through her method, these children (3-6 years old) experienced an incredible transformation from frightened, destructive, tearful children into masters of their environment and leaders of their own learning. Her origins in transforming children of oppressed populations and commitment for humanity through a deep reverence for a child make both her philosophy and method an appropriate foundation for a pedagogy of liberation.

Unfortunately, it is far too easy to forget we all began as fragile, alien, and completely vulnerable children. Montessori describes the time of birth as a “violent conflict and struggle, and consequent suffering” in which a child must make “the most difficult adjustment of all, passing from one mode of existence to another” (Montessori 1966). Montessori credits psychoanalysis with opening the door to explore and understand the human subconscious, which allowed us to make the crucial realization that “a psychosis can have its origins in infancy...” and “what occurred in one’s childhood should be taken into account” (Montessori 1966). Adults are often responsible for any trauma a child experiences as the transition into the alien world proves to be incredibly demanding and delicate. Sadly, it is quite likely that at one point our childhood innocence was brutally treated with a lack of respect to varying degrees. As Montessori explains, these traumas tend to stay with us into adulthood. As a consequence of trauma and a reluctance to face it, adults may come to fear the intense vulnerability of children and approach them as little strangers. Depending on the severity of the trauma and the extent to which it has been forgotten, we perpetuate the same treatment on the children we encounter. The cycle of violence and abuse proves victims

often become perpetrators when they do not receive any rehabilitation in facing their trauma. Violating the trust children have in adults causes irreparable damage not only to the child who is victimized, but any future potential victim in continuing the cycle and even to the perpetrator himself.

Montessori correctly believed we must turn our attention to the child in order to rid society of its evils. Her focus on education shows that learning how to learn is fundamental to the human experience. Her method guides each individual child through the spiritual and physical growing process. Montessori believes “growth is essentially a mysterious process in which a form of energy animates the inert body of a newborn child and gives it...the power to act and to express its own will” (Montessori 1970). The child’s discovery of her own will at this early age must be respected, protected and carefully guided in order to develop into a proper adult. Montessori also believed every person had their own creative spirit, making them a work of art (Montessori 1966). From birth, a child begins to develop her inner life; and though she may not be able to articulate the manifestations of this growth, her personality begins to take shape. This secret effort, Montessori explains, should be regarded as sacred because “it is in this creative period that an individual’s future personality is determined” (Montessori 1966). Martin Buber also recognized the pure possibility with which a child is born. In a 1926 address to a conference on education (the theme of which was the development of the creative powers of a child), Buber begins by acknowledging that “the child is a reality; [and thus,] education must become a reality” (Buber 2002). Though the child arrives vulnerably into the world and requires the help of adults, she alone yearns to realize her

potentiality. Buber believed the child had an originator instinct, or what Freire might call a creative capacity: “The child of [humans] wants to make things. What the child desires is its own share in this becoming of things: it wants to be the subject of this event of production” (Buber 2002). In addition, Buber argued real education must be made possible “by the realization that youthful spontaneity must not be suppressed but must be allowed to give what it can” (Buber 2002). This imperative for an active, spontaneous, liberating education is very much in sync with Freire, Noddings’ and Montessori’s approach to education, allowing a child to achieve her humanity by expressing her own will and claiming her agency through action.

Montessori approaches inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge through liberty, independence, and order. Key to the Montessori Method is a striving towards the “liberation of the inner life of a child” as well as a strong sense of freedom within the classroom. Children are very sensitive to order, particularly at the time when young children are experiencing what Montessori called their “sensitive periods” because of heightened attention to their developing sensorial capacities. Children determine order through repetitive experience, such as the placement of objects and the manner in which we use these objects. Although infants will react strongly (usually protesting with tears) when order is interrupted, school-aged children independently act upon the perceived disorder. When they see an object is not in its place, they will return it to its’ rightful order. In Montessori classrooms, children are free to move about and pursue whatever activity interests them. They are no longer at an age in which they will react with tears if objects are not in order, rather they will freely reinstate the order. This desire for order is

particularly important to the child because when the environment is orderly, children can confidently maneuver themselves gracefully within that space. As they learn to affect the environment, children also realize the environment in turn affects them. Consequently, they begin to form an intimate relationship with their surroundings and respect it for its familiarity.

Montessori's valuable insight to focus on the child's activity as a developing human can have a crucial influence on the present *banking* approach to education. Of particular importance to her method is the preparation of teachers. Montessori argued it was crucial for teachers to go through spiritual preparation in order to respond appropriately to the individual and unique sensitivities of a child. Indeed, teachers of this method should not only be aware and responsive to the sensitivities of a child's growth and development, but have this particular disposition alongside a deep interest in humanity and authentically concerned with their students' existence. As will be described further in what follows, teachers who have this disposition can move swiftly from mis-educators to revolutionary educators.

Paulo Freire's Humanizing Pedagogy

As previously demonstrated, Freire's *banking* concept of education is necessarily an oppressive relationship, in which the teacher is a narrating Subject and the students are passive objects. The content delivered is completely alien to their lived experiences making it difficult for students to engage with the material, and teachers tend to interpret their resistance as a lack of ability and/or motivation. As Freire explains, *banking* education can, at the very least, severely reduce students' creativity and at worst,

completely eradicate it. Without their creative power, students cannot realize their agency to transform their world as free subjects. Students are left at the mercy of *bank-clerk* teachers (also sub-oppressors, or mis-educators) and other oppressor elites to determine whatever ends they see fit. The education in the United States fits this description and suffers from narration sickness restricting the creativity of all students. However, students of color are particularly disadvantaged because the system of education privileges their White counterparts reproducing inequality outside of the educational sphere. Often, the oppressed are considered marginal to society but, as Freire explains, this is an utterly false notion; they are a necessary part of an oppressive society which uses them as “beings for others” (Freire 2000).

Freire’s solution is not mere integration (such as was first attempted with the historic *Brown* decision), but a complete transformation of the oppressive structure in which the oppressed become agents of their own action. Humanization is our vocation as people and we can only be fulfilled “to the extent that [we] create [our] world (which is a human world), and create it with [our] transforming labor” (Freire 2000). The impersonal approach to education illustrated in the previous chapter through the stories of students at Seguin HS, the elimination of Raza Studies in Tucson, and the abuses of high-stakes testing in El Paso show how schooling devalues the experiences of students, reducing their chances of succeeding academically, and thus relegating them to the margins of society. The relationship between schools and Latina and Latino students is utterly dehumanizing because it represses creativity keeping students from achieving their full humanity.

In order for *all* people to become humanized,¹⁸ Freire proposes a liberating *problem-posing* education to replace the *banking* concept of education. Liberation is praxis; that is, a continual dialectic of action and critical reflection in order to transform our reality (Freire 2000). The pedagogy within a *problem-posing* education enables the critical realization that “both oppressors and oppressed are manifestations of dehumanization” (Freire 2000). However, it is the unique task of the oppressed to liberate both themselves and oppressors because the oppressed truly yearn for freedom from their subordinate position in the world. The oppressed are motivated by an act of love through a resistance of oppressive lovelessness, as oppression is necrophilic, “nourished by a love of death, not life” (Freire 2000). For sub-oppressors to truly join the process of liberation with solidarity, a great amount of effort and commitment to the oppressed is required; Freire refers to those committed towards the ends of the oppressed as *revolutionary educators*, which counter *bank-clerk* teachers who are themselves products of *banking* education.

For sub-oppressor *bank-clerk* teachers to become true revolutionaries and move away from mis-education, they must enter into genuine dialogue with their students. As Freire explains, the revolution must be understood as an act of love “because of its creative and liberating nature” (Freire 2000). For *bank-clerk* teachers to love and commit to their students is truly an act of courage; this commitment is a cause of liberation, enabling dialogue between teachers and students effectively replacing the narration of *banking* education (Freire 2000). Mutual trust can then be formed through dialogue

¹⁸ Indeed, oppressors are not fully human because they exploit and steal the humanity of others.

containing love, humility, and faith. *Banking* education can only continue to oppress because it espouses “False love, false humility and feeble faith in others [thus it] cannot create trust” (Freire 2000). In *problem-posing* education, teachers become teacher-students and students become students-teachers all learning from and teaching each other in order to adequately “fulfill its function as the practice of freedom” (Freire 2000). For knowledge to be authentic it must be communal, rather than a mechanism for domination and control; authentic knowledge emerges only through inquiry and praxis with the world and with each other.¹⁹ The students-teachers must be in control of their education in order to participate as willfully creative agents. By their own cognition (inquiry and praxis) rather than through a transferal of information, students humanize themselves and no longer remain empty receptacles to be filled.

Although it is very important for educators to reflect upon their bias when dealing with historically and presently oppressed populations, it is even more important for Latinas and Latinos facing these challenges to become critically conscious of their position in the world. As Freire argues, it is the task of the oppressed to reflect upon their subordination and respond by acting upon their reality in order to transform it²⁰. Though there may be teachers and academics sensitive to the structural oppression imposed upon

¹⁹ TUSD’s attempt at Raza Studies offers a practical model for finding a balance between developing critical consciousness while also encouraging creativity. Students learned about structures of oppression while forming meaningful relationships with teachers, but also managed to succeed in state mandated standardized testing and other performance measures, such as high school graduation. Unfortunately, majoritarian politics subverted these successes and eliminated the program.

²⁰ Montessori’s method enables the formation of this relationship with one’s environment early in a student’s life.

Latina and Latino students, to be truly liberated students must take matters into their own hands by tapping into the creativity the school system has tried to repress. Freire describes the content of a liberating education as developed according to dialogue between revolutionary educators and students. For the content to truly consist of dialogue and not oppression, it must be defined by the experiences of the students themselves. Only when the parameters of education are generated through dialogue (which requires love, humility, and faith) in a genuine encounter between teacher and students will the education and knowledge gained truly be a practice of freedom.

One major limitation of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is its' primary concern with adult liberating education and cannot speak for the education of K-12 students, especially very young children. However, this does not negate the utility of his framework (Freire 2000). In fact, Freire's *problem-solving* education on its' own can be incredibly helpful for those who want to become revolutionary educators of K-12 student. Educators who learn as adults from Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, in combination with Montessori's respect for the child and Noddings' ethic of caring, will be properly informed in order to implement a humanizing, liberating education for young Latinas and Latinos.

Nel Noddings' Ethic of Caring

Nel Noddings' ethic of caring complements Freire's call to love others and the world by offering practical methods to initiate transformation with others and overcome oppression. Although the caring relationship can be developed with anyone, Noddings describes a form of pedagogical caring that is necessary in the teacher-student

relationship. This approach of genuine caring is an adequate step towards combating the structural oppression within the current education system (and in turn society) by developing meaningful relationships that enhance the ethical ideal of both one-caring and cared-for. Through the caring relation, students learn how to authentically care and be responsible for others through the care they receive from teachers. Noddings developed her approach to caring relationships through Buber's conception of relation in education, modeled after the deeply humanistic²¹ relation between *I* and *Thou*.

Relation within education, says Buber, is dialogical²² and can be understood through three main forms of inclusion (Buber 2002). The first is an "abstract yet mutual experience of inclusion" in which one becomes aware of the other by recognizing "the truth-of-existence and the existence-of-truth", each acknowledging the humanity in the other (Buber 2002). The second form "is based on a concrete one-sided experience of inclusion," in which the teacher takes on an authoritative relationship with the student; in fact, it is the teacher's task to determine their influence upon the student (Buber 2002). The teacher must deeply acknowledge the individuality of the student by experiencing the relation "from over there", from the position of the student (Buber 2002). This displacement allows the teacher to profoundly feel "how [the relation] ... affects this other human being" in order to recognize the limit of his position as an authority (Buber 2002). The teacher of all humans, says Buber, is "the one from whom inclusion may and

²¹ The appeal for a humanist approach also closely aligns with both Montessori's and Freire's call for humanity and humanization.

²² Buber's conception of dialogue, similar to Freire's, also requires trust and inclusion (Buber 2002).

should change from an alarming and edifying event into an atmosphere” (Buber 2002). This atmosphere of relation between teacher and student is a very rich and active experience for all involved, very different from *banking* education in which the teacher is the only active subject. However, it is still problematic because the student plays a much more passive role as in the narrative subject/passive object relationship in *banking* education; this relation is not only paternalistic, but also oppressive. The third form of relation within education is one of mutual inclusion, more akin to friendship. Before arriving at this form of relation, the teacher has mobility from both ends of the relation (one’s own and the student’s), but the student remains on the receiving end of the relation. When the student achieves the same mobility as the teacher, the relation of education ends and becomes friendship “based on a concrete and mutual experience of inclusion. It is the true inclusion of one another by human souls” (Buber 2002).

Influenced by Buber’s relation in education, Noddings’ feminist approach to an ethic of caring offers a more inclusive framework providing a practical implementation for Freire’s call to love humans and the world in order to move towards liberating ends.

A relation of genuine care, according to Noddings, will enhance the ethical ideal of both one-caring and cared-for because the human consciousness of both seeks to be in relation. Within the framework of genuine care, the concern for community is motivated by a shared responsibility for others. Noddings believes we experience joy in realizing we are receptive beings responsible for the subjectivity of others. In other words, joy as affect reveals the responsibility for others not only because being in relation is enjoyable but it also enhances the ethical ideal of one-caring. A disposition of openness, from both

teacher and student, is necessary for the caring relation to be genuine and effective (Noddings 2003). Our consciousness is freely intentional and willingly gives up power for the others' form of subjectivity. The freedom of consciousness becomes manifest through vulnerable reciprocity and receives the other; this, says Noddings, is why we are joyful in the awareness of our relation²³ (Noddings 2003). The caring relationship can take place between teacher, as one-caring, and student, as cared-for. The teacher is engrossed in the student and undergoes a motivational displacement towards the ends of the student. The teacher encounters the student as a humanized, creative subject, thus the teacher receives the student as a whole through dialogue (Noddings 2003). It is the task of the one-caring (teacher) to receive the cared-for (student), caring for the other by adopting a perspective informed by the experiences of the teacher but ultimately directed towards the ends of the student (Noddings 2003).

Noddings argues a teaching relation is one of pedagogical caring and can only be successful when inclusion is achieved: a teacher “who cannot practice inclusion fails as a teacher” (Noddings 2003). The student, on the other hand, does not necessarily have to achieve inclusion to accomplish their own ends; the student is liberated “by the teacher’s engrossment in him and his projects to pursue those projects” (Noddings 2003). Moreover, the student need not be concerned with the personal development of the teacher for education to succeed. If the student were to reciprocate this care, Noddings agrees with Buber that it would be an occurrence of “mutual inclusion [which] moves a

²³ The vulnerability we experience in a child’s demand for relatedness is also what produces joy upon relation; this notion complements Montessori’s appeal for respecting the life of a child.

relationship away from that of student-teacher towards friendship” (Noddings 2003). Freire refers to this conception of inclusion as solidarity, requiring communication and authentic thinking. For revolutionary educators to be in solidarity with oppressed students, they necessarily ought to have a “profound trust in people and their creative power” (Noddings 2003). In addition, Freire argues true solidarity calls for more than mere co-existence with students; revolutionary educators should live *with* the oppressed in solidarity (Freire 2000). However, this particular demand seems more appropriate for adults in the teacher-student relationships and not as practically applicable with K-12 students. Though teachers can successfully find a middle ground by creating relationships with parents of students, living *with* their students is not a viable option in the present system of public education (nor do I argue that it should be).

The one-caring can “receive the other” in genuine caring and comes close to being *with* the other; Noddings refers to Buber’s description of relation between *I* and *Thou* in which one receives the other and is totally *with* the other. Receptivity, similar to Buber’s mutual inclusion, does not “[think] the other as object, [does not make] claims to knowledge” (Noddings 2003). Rather what is being offered in moments of genuine care is “an invitation to see things from an alternative perspective” (Noddings 2003). For teachers of Latinas and Latinos, being able to see from the alternative perspective of their students is crucial for liberation. Within this framework of caring, the teacher receives the student and experiences a motivational shift in which the teacher’s “motive energy flows toward the other...and towards his ends” (Noddings 2003). The teacher as one-caring does not give herself up, but shares her motive energy by putting her energy

at the service of the other. Freire's notion of true solidarity reaffirms this caring relationship as an act of love affirming the other as a person "who [has] been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice..." (Freire 2000) Within this relation of caring, the teacher receives the student, accepts his motives and looks at the project *with* him. The teacher's commitment to the students' motives liberates them to pursue their own projects. The cared-for in this caring relation is recognized as a humanized subject, an agent of creativity. According to Noddings, when the teacher is particularly receptive, the student eagerly receives the caring offered. This pedagogical caring is a teacher's obligation to meet her student as one-caring separate from "the formal requirements of teaching as a profession" (Noddings 2003). As a result of genuine pedagogical caring, the student as cared-for is liberated through a realization of humanity in the relation. The cared-for's willing and unselfconscious revealing of self is what he contributes to the relationship (Noddings 2003). In genuine pedagogical caring, the student loves and trusts the teacher and will often enthusiastically "respond with interest to challenges proffered by the one-caring" (Noddings 2003).

The bureaucratic, *banking* approach currently taken in mis-education disallows the development of this pedagogical relation of caring. Thus, through the implementation of this ethical framework in schooling, students will learn how to authentically care through their relationships with teachers and will then be able to practice their roles as one-caring and cared-for with their peers. This desire for relatedness is similar to the trust Montessori sees the child place in parents and teachers; the defenseless child so loves his parents who protect him that he wishes to please them.

Parents and teachers have an especially delicate responsibility to the child because of this unadulterated trust. Noddings says a parent's acceptance of their child encourages their action, completing the caring relation because the child is made "to feel a partner in the enterprise...the parent's attitude goes beyond acceptance to what Buber calls 'confirmation'...the child is welcome[d and] seen as a contributing person" (Noddings 2003). Through this relation of pedagogical caring directed towards the ends of students, Latinas and Latinos can then become active agents contributing and participating in their educational experience.

Pedagogy of Humanity, Liberation, and Care

Structural inequalities are pervasive within the public school system, with disadvantaged and oppressed populations experiencing the brunt of sociological, political and economic inequality. Minority groups, especially Latinas and Latinos, are quickly outgrowing the White population, which has historically inherited power and privilege. The task of current and future generations is to manage this changing dynamic. The historically oppressed will keep demanding change, but until they can be fully contributing actors in this transformation there will continue to be oppression and racial conflict. The coming revolution should not simply be a reversal of power because an oppressive relationship would persist. Thus, a pedagogy informed by humanity, liberation, and care is a crucial step towards an education free of oppression.

The pedagogy I am proposing is targeted to those teachers who are sympathetic to structural inequality and are genuinely concerned with the lives and futures of their oppressed students. These teachers include teachers of color (who are themselves

marginalized) and teachers of privilege (who recognize the oppressive nature of education), both of whom reject *banking* education. As products of *banking* education themselves²⁴, the proposed pedagogy informed by humanity, liberation, and care can provide these teachers with a more inclusive framework they are not exposed to within the system of mis-education. The training and tools they receive, despite their purported objectives, do not actually help their students overcome *banking* education; in fact, their training is an extension of the system that exacerbates inequality.

The proposed pedagogy will compensate for the repressive features of mis-education for oppressed students of color whom the system continues to devalue and exclude in order to reproduce inequality. Teachers who serve oppressed students must understand the task of pedagogy as a liberating, humanizing act of love. These teachers must have a deep respect for the child, recognize the legitimacy of their oppressed experience, and be open to developing a genuinely caring relation with the student. Through this relation, the student is encouraged to seek relation with others and take charge of her own humanity in order to transform her world of oppression. Thus, a pedagogy informed by Montessori's reverence for humanity, Freire's call for liberation, and Noddings' ethic of care will help marginalized students survive the oppressive school system.

The students of this pedagogy will develop a deep respect and obligation towards humanization, be informed about the oppressive structure and the possibility of

²⁴ Indeed, they too were once students who survived public education and are also trained through traditional degrees in education, the content of which is dictated by the institution of mis-education.

liberation, and will feel an ethical imperative to care for the following generation of students through pedagogical caring. Having survived *banking* education, students of this pedagogy would desire to return to education and continue affecting succeeding generations of marginalized and oppressed students. Whether they return as educators, administrators²⁵, or even politicians, these liberated students would commit to eradicating inequality until education itself is recreated.

All students will benefit from this pedagogy. The marginalized will feel a strong imperative to return to education for the purpose of liberation, and the privileged will genuinely care for the plight of oppressed committing to the liberation of all. As agents of transformation who have generated communal knowledge that speaks to their experience as oppressed, they join society as critically conscious adults who recreate education, thus recreating society into one that challenges oppressive structures. In this way, education will continue to be a tool to achieve sociopolitical ends; however the ends will be responsive to the diverse needs of a society trying to overcome the oppressive structures we have inherited. The aim of education within this pedagogy is liberation from these structures in order to facilitate continual reform and redefinition of the meaning of education according to the needs of all, rather than an external imposition by those in power.

²⁵ I encourage training through alternative methods of certification rather than traditional teaching methods in order to avoid as much as possible the oppressive structure of *banking* education. Though entirely subverting the system will be impossible as the revolution begins to build, continual evasion through different channels of education will eventually enable transformation.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Structural inequalities pervasive within the public school system clearly reveal that education is not doing what it claims to do for all students. Not only does the structure of education fail students by reproducing socioeconomic and political inequity, more importantly it robs students of their humanity. By tracing the historical relationship between politics and education, I have shown how the aim of education within the United States has been used as a political tool to achieve political ends. Minority groups, and especially Latinas and Latinos, are quickly outgrowing the white population which has historically inherited power and privilege. The task of current and future generations is to manage this changing social, political, and economic dynamic. Particularly in matters of education and schooling, Latinas and Latinos have persistently low academic attainment partially due to an insistence to strip them of their language and culture. Though I do not claim the proposed pedagogy informed by humanity, liberation, and care will entirely end all oppression, I truly believe the intersections between Montessori, Freire, and Noddings provide a valuable and practical approach for teachers to take despite the present circumstances. Change takes time; especially change that is so deeply rooted in our behaviors, beliefs, and institutions. If we are to learn to live together as a democratic community, we must work with the tools at our disposal while strongly encouraging and cultivating the possibility for change. We must come to understand the democratic principles of equality, liberty, and justice as truly accessible

to *all* members of our society. Though the proposed pedagogy cultivates a genuine concern and responsibility for others, it does not compromise a celebration of the individual by freely encouraging the development of creativity.

Since the early 1900s, education was primarily used as a tool to socialize and develop American values in immigrants and their children. However, diverse populations have persistently resisted pressure to shed one's cultural identity and assimilate. Oppressed populations are aware of their subordinate position in the world, and as human beings they do not easily yield to repressive impositions. However, the institutionalized systems of power are much too large to easily overcome. Though resistance movements and rebellion should be recognized as legitimate acts towards transformation, they are nonetheless relatively small compared to the structures of power and domination established for over 2000 years. Regardless, there is an increasing awareness and intolerance of the racial bias that has plagued our history. We can no longer allow the narrow, discriminatory, deeply-rooted beliefs within societal institutions inform unilateral decision-making, especially not for oppressed populations. First and foremost, it is morally deplorable to continue excluding a growing population from sharing and participating in the democratic community. Furthermore, their exclusion is no longer practical – perhaps more strongly, no longer possible – to continue neglecting the critical moral (not to mention social, political, and economic) implications of such discrimination and abuse.

One of the most crucial changes society must make is to develop a deep reverence and respect for humanity through the life of the child. Historically, children

have been seen as empty vessels that required adults to define their being, and were neglected as half-beings who did not deserve dignity and respect. Educators in particular should recognize the importance of early childhood education, not as the easiest way to dictate a child's being by imposing an alien world upon them, but as a stage for pure possibility and creativity which we can respectfully learn from and guide. We are woefully mistaken to allow the system of education to treat students as objects passing through a dehumanizing machine of mis-education. By recognizing and including the historically, culturally, and linguistically diverse experiences of the growing "minority" population, education can enable society to confront the remaining (and as of yet unrevealed) discrimination and bias. Though it may be difficult and will inevitably be resisted, the proposed pedagogy allows the oppressed to face their oppression and initiate a transformation that avoids further oppression through guilt, blame, and hatred.

In sum, Chapter II traced the historical development of Western political thought and its' influence on the educational sphere, particularly in the American democratic conception of education. With the turn of the 20th Century came the industrialization of mass education. The growing racial tensions demanded a change in discriminatory practices. However, further institutionalizing education through policy measures only succeeded in perpetuating a system of privilege and racism. The move towards more centralized government involvement in education also masks the severity of institutional bias. For this reason, it is not appropriate to suggest the proposed pedagogy of humanity, liberation, and care to be incorporated into traditional teacher training but encouraged through independent and alternative methods to teacher certification.

Chapter III critically analyzed the detrimental effects of the educational system and policy informed by the history discussed in Chapter II. Educational policy certainly does not protect or compensate for the disadvantage lived by the populations it purports to serve. As was discussed in Chapter III, educational policy acts as majoritarian narratives that stifle and neglect critical race counterstories. Through bureaucratic functions and practices, policy reproduces the status quo while masking the severity and permanence of inequality. Banking mis-education perpetuates structural oppression leaving teachers ill-equipped to form meaningful teacher-student relationships. Looking forward, programs such as Raza Studies from Tucson USD should be explored as a possibility to address social injustices and inequalities, to promote educational achievement by legitimizing the counterstories of students, and to encourage meaningful relationships between teachers and students.

Finally, the pedagogy of humanity, liberation and care proposed in Chapter IV can produce students who have learned how to think independently and creatively, how to participate with others and empathize with their perspectives, and who are ethically inspired to commit to a truly more inclusive share in the democratic principles of justice, liberty, and equality. As such, this approach to education would more fully prepare all students to participate in an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural society, emphasizing an educational experience that validates, respects, and celebrates difference while encouraging a creative imagination and a genuine imperative to care for others.

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